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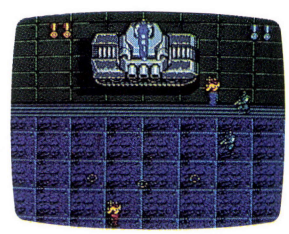

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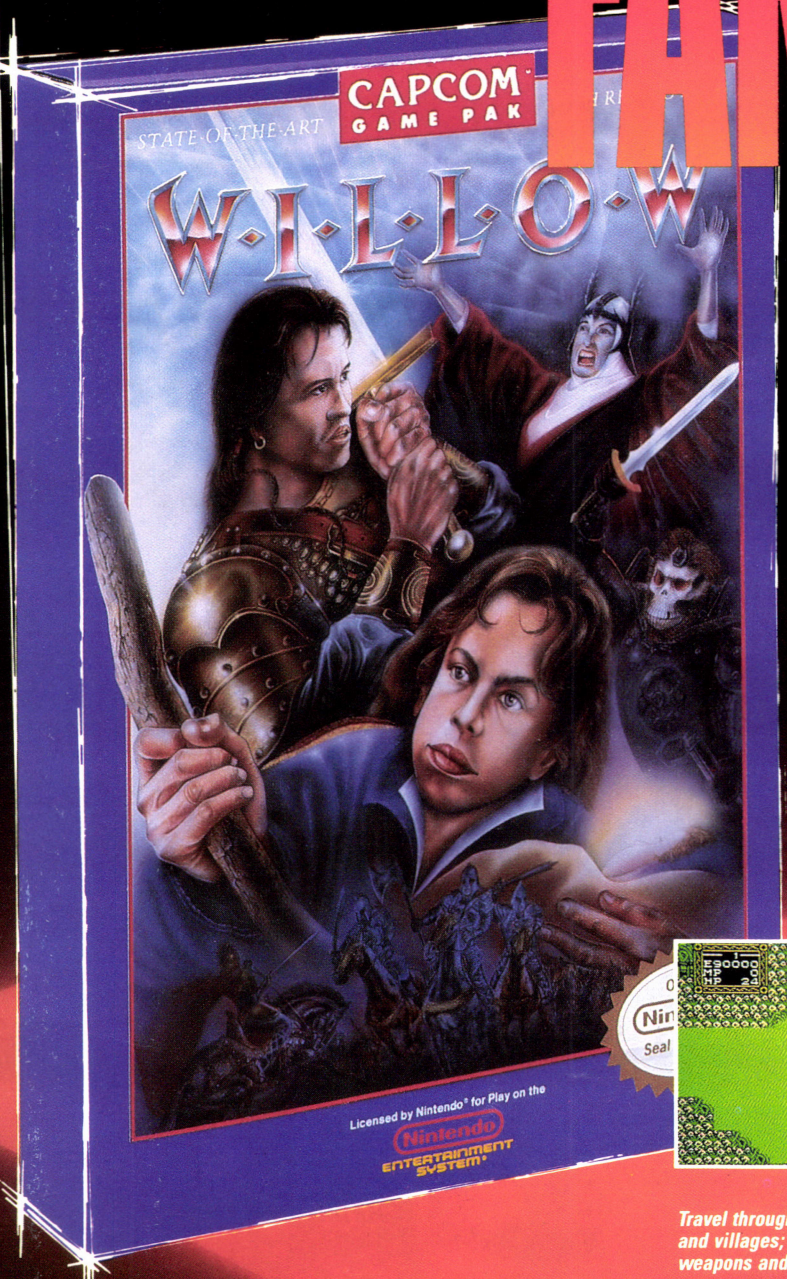

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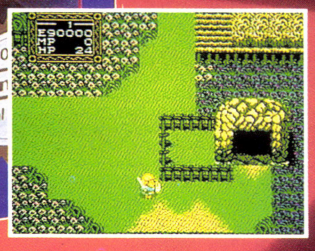

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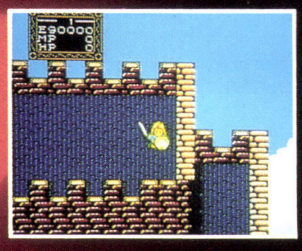

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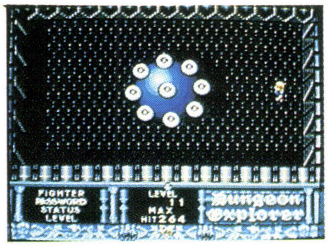

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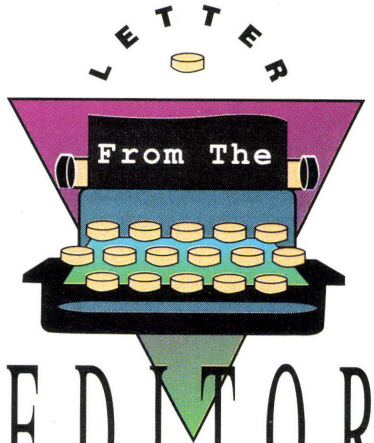
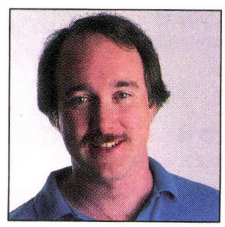


I've got to be honest with you: This column serves as a "core dump" of what's going through my mind with regards to the video-game world. My brain gets filled with all sorts of subjects from phone calls, trade shows, meetings and shopping trips, and it's a chore to figure out what I should address in *my space*. You see, the rest of VG&CE is devoted to what is happening in the industry, but this one page lets me vent *my* feelings on anything I want to chatter on about. It's a risk I'm willing to take, and I've gotten many positive comments on my views.



This month, having just returned from the January Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, there certainly are lots of things for me to talk about—such as the "TurboGrafx portable" we first revealed to our readership in the February 1990 issue (*News Bits*, page 18. Unfortunately it's too early for us to do a full report on it because many aspects of the unit are still up in the air). We came away from CES with lots of hot info: How about a CD player for the NES; or maybe you'd be interested in a game from Sega that was designed by and stars Michael Jackson; or perhaps you want to hear about yet another portable game system that's in the works.

The trouble is, the show is only a *preliminary* peek at the year's coming products—many in incomplete, prototype form. Sadly, we'll have to leave the stories for future issues of VG&CE when we can give you *all* of the details. We don't want you to be told only part of the story!

My new accomplice on this difficult mission is a name that may be familiar to some of you diehard video-game addicts. The staff of VG&CE is enhanced with the addition of Donn Nauert, whose past accomplishments include being captain of the U.S. National Video Game Team. Donn, who'll take the role of Assistant Editor, is an amazing player who has won many video-game competitions, appeared on TV and counseled countless gamers. In fact, though he was behind the scenes, Donn contributed his talents to some of NEC's early TurboGrafx-16 TV commercials.

With Donn's help, we're sure that VG&CE will continue to become a more powerful source of information for the reader. After all, our goal is to provide the best magazine for the hard-core game player. And to this end, as before, we're anxious to hear how you feel about VG&CE—whether it be kudos or criticism. Simply send us a note to VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210. We'd be happy to hear what you have to say about the job we're doing.

Now, if you'd be so kind as to turn the page, we'll start on this month's exciting journey. As Arsenio Hall says, "Let's get busy!"

—Andy Eddy, Executive Editor

Greg Norman's Shark Attack!

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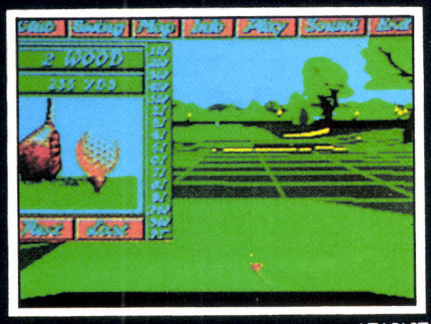
It's professional golf at its best with the game's most aggressive and successful player, Greg Norman . . . a state-of-the-art golf simulation with more realistic three-dimensional graphics than you've ever seen before!

Rich in detail, Shark Attack is packed with features not included in lesser games, including:

- Pre-game Practice, Matchplay, Greensomes, Strokeplay, and Texas Scramble, all handicapped according to adjustable attributes, with single and team play options (up to four players).
- A professional caddy who can recommend the club to use for each shot.
- On-screen ability to design your own swing, for a game which is more dependent on skill than luck.
- Greg Norman's swing digitized for your instruction in the best golfing form.
- Ability to open and close the club face and adjust the loft, totally on-screen, for greater control.



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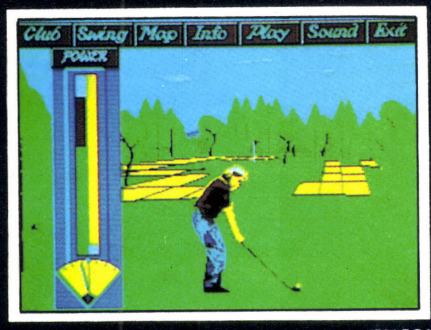
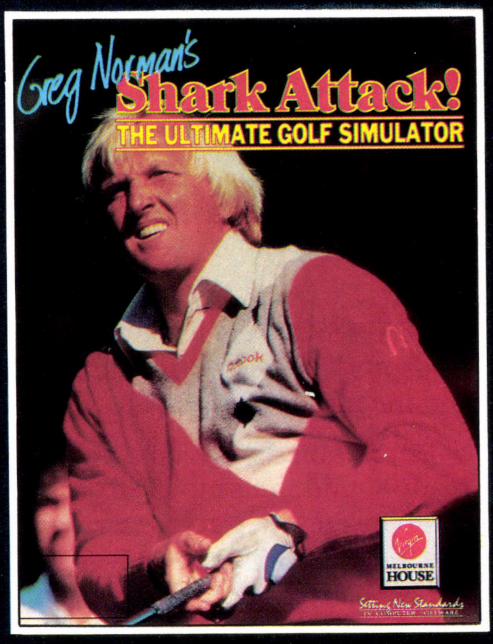


IBM EGA

- A 3-D perspective, which can be rotated through 360 degrees from any point. You can really walk each hole, and study the lie of each shot just like you would on a real golf course (one of the features that make this a simulation, not just a game).
- Changing wind and weather conditions, to add to the challenge.

Greg Norman's Shark Attack: the first true golf simulation, produced under the guidance of the Great White Shark himself! As on the pro circuit, total concentration, strategy and control are all required to come in under par!



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READER MAIL

LETTER(S) OF THE MONTH

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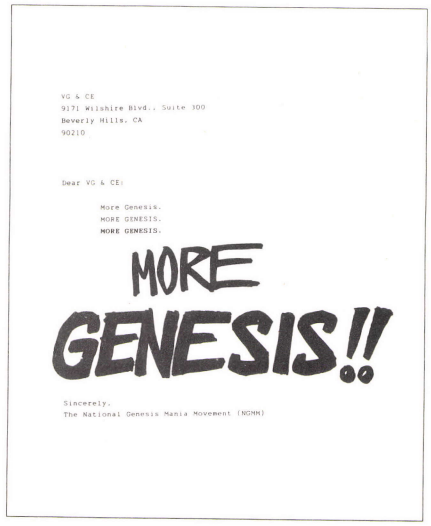
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9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300
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90210

Dear VG & CE:

More Genesis.
MORE GENESIS.
MORE GENESIS.

MORE GENESIS!!

Sincerely,
The National Genesis Mania Movement (NGMM)

To give credit where credit is due, VG&CE *received a bunch of these letters. It seems as though some photocopy machines are getting a workout around the country on behalf of Genesis owners.*

To answer the requests, it's inevitable that the Genesis will get more coverage in VG&CE *but the NES community is still the largest component of our readership. For this reason, more of our articles will deal with NES products.*

We are big fans of the next-generation game consoles, but be patient. You'll see more Genesis coverage before too long. (For that matter, keep your eyes peeled for a related announcement to appear in VG&CE.*)*

CHOMPING AT THE BIT

Dear VG&CE:

It seems that your magazine and others believe that the new Sega Genesis and NEC TurboGrafx-16 will be a success because of the improved graphics and game play. But most publications have overlooked one major obstacle in the way. I believe it would be safe to say that most of the people who want a home video-game system have one by now. I just don't see many people paying $200 dollars for a new system and 50-70 bucks for games when they can pay less for cartridges for a system they already own. That eliminates almost all of the potential market.

—Kelly McKenzie
Somerset, Kentucky

Yes, Kelly, we do have high hopes that the new machines will revolutionize video gaming, but we certainly don't expect that this change from 8-bit to 16-bit will take place overnight. You're right in your analysis that many people already own a lower-end console; but most industry insiders figure that the same evolution that made the once-popular Atari 2600 obsolete will eventually work its magic on the NES and SMS.

It's only fair that, as a publication that reports on the up-to-date goings-on in the video-game world, we pass along all that we can about the latest game developments. Keep in mind that we still prominently feature all the 8-bit machines because that is where the majority of the players are, but as technology moves forward, so will the game-playing public.

MISSING LYNX

Dear VG&CE:

First, I would like to commend your magazine for its wide variety of information on not only video games, but computer games as well. Many's the time when I have seen a magazine that claims to "cover it all" when it comes to video games. Upon reading it, it turns out to contain very little useful info on any of the systems it covers. VG&CE is one of the best, if not *the* best, magazines of its kind.

There's only one question I have for you: Where can I get ahold of the Atari Lynx? Ever since I read your well-done article about the Lynx (VG&CE , October 1989), I have been searching for it everywhere! Either the game dealership doesn't carry the Lynx or hasn't heard of it. I suspect the latter is due to the lack of publicity for [the Lynx], as I have seen neither television nor magazine ads. I first heard about the Lynx by word of mouth and, of course, your magazine.

I hope you can help me with this problem, and I thank you for finally bringing the public a magazine they can really use. Keep up the good work!

—Randy Warren
Simi Valley, California

Those are some really nice compliments you've dished on us, Randy. Thanks!

As far as the Lynx goes, Atari released it much later than they expected to, launching it near the end of November 1989. Due to limited supply, they began by selling it only in the metropolitan New York City area, a situation that still exists as we write this (early January).

Our understanding, based on Atari's feedback, is that the Lynx should be available throughout the U.S. by the time you read this. The best way to keep up on it is to contact Atari yourself: Their address is 1196 Borregas Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94086, and their phone number is (408) 745-2000.

If you are interested in color portable game machines, you might want to keep an eye on VG&CE *for the latest about the "TurboGrafx-16" prototype. Though at this point there are few details that we can give out, we do make note of our first impressions on page 16 in* News Bits. *There will certainly be further reports on this and other developments in coming issues.*

ADULTS PLAY TOO!

Dear VG&CE:

Just a short note of thanks for publishing such a fine magazine. As an adult enthusiast, the more restrained tone of your magazine is much appreciated. Sometimes I think some of the other magazines will run out of exclamation points (!!!!) before they get to the last article!!!

I also enjoy the variety of articles each month; "Is it Live or Is it...Cyberspace?"

Letters to be considered for publication should be addressed to *Reader Mail*, VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210. Letters may be edited for style, clarity and space considerations. We regret that we cannot respond to all mail received.

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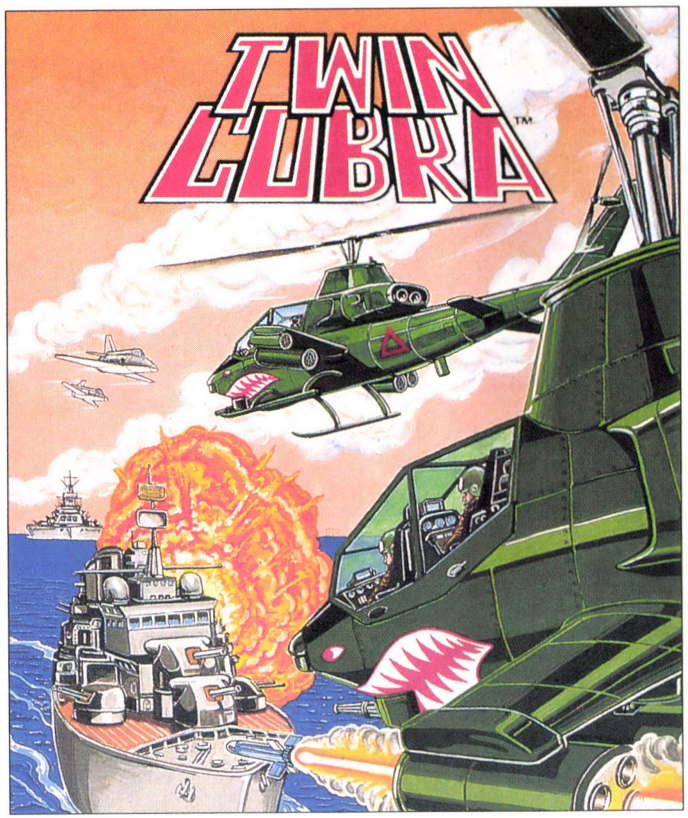

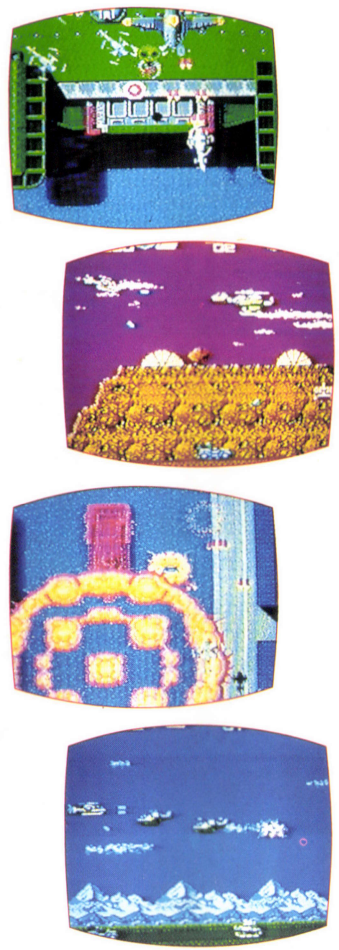

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(VG&CE, January 1990) was well researched, written and illustrated. Feature articles such as this show us the potential future of gaming. Personally, I would like to see more on gaming hardware—"pull the top off" of one of the 16-bit games, and show us around.

As an owner of an NEC TurboGrafx-16, I'm excited to see you are publishing a magazine specifically for the TG-16. I recently subscribed to TurboPlay and am looking forward to receiving my first issue. On the other hand, I was disappointed with the dearth of 16-bit coverage in the January issue of VG&CE—one review (*Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*) and a couple of lines in *Yea & Nay*. I hope this changes soon. I realize that 8-bit systems still control the market, but certainly there is more to report on the 16-bit scene than your January issue indicated.

—Dann Veldkamp
Indianapolis, Indiana

Thanks for your heartfelt praise, Dann. We intend to put out the best magazine, and we have some of the best writers in the biz to help us accomplish that.

With regards to the 16-bit coverage in the magazine: It's hard to run a large amount of 16-bit information when the systems are just starting to be sold (as was the case in our January issue). Things are still picking up, but we expect that soon we'll further extend the amount of 16-bit articles we run.

COMPUTER OR CONSOLE?

Dear VG&CE:

I currently own an NES and am satisfied with much of the software I've chosen. But recently I've been considering purchasing an Amiga so that I may delve into computer gaming. I'm very much attracted to the Amiga's graphics, but I'm unsure of its game play.

What I'm trying to say is: What is it like to play a computer game when you're used to playing video games with an ordinary control pad? (I'm into games like *Zelda*, *SMB*, *Dragon Warrior* and *Metroid*.) I would also like to use the Amiga for school.

Could you give me your ideas? I don't have any friends that own Amigas, and I certainly can't sample all the software down at my local computer shop.

Thank you.

—Jason Marcouillier
Ft. Riley, Kansas

The crossroad you have reached is indeed a tough one. The cost of a computer is quite a bit higher than a game console's, but you have the added capability to run programs that will enhance your productivity (if you so choose). And that seems to be the situation you are running into:You want to be able to play a variety of games, but you also want to use your computer for schoolwork.

The best thing to do is find a computer store that can demonstrate the Amiga (or any other computer you care to look at) so you can see for yourself what it can do—and also decide if buying is for you. It would be unfair for me to give you my thoughts because everyone has different needs.

HOW DO WE DO IT?

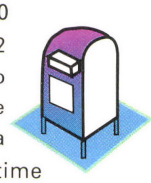
Dear VG&CE:

I recently walked into my local bookstore to pick up some of my favorite gaming magazines. I always buy your magazine in addition to two others. To my distress, when I arrived at the store, I discovered I had enough money for only one magazine.

I'm not going to lie: I didn't valiantly grab your magazine without checking out how good it was first. Comparing it to my two other choices, I was quickly astonished VG&CE had grown considerably in size since its previous issues. (This was the December 1989 issue, and it was a whopping 192 pages long.)

I also discovered the contents were—as usual—of great quality. You covered everything I was looking for. All this and your magazine cost $1 less than any other there!

I needed no more convincing. I happily walked out of the store with the December 1989 issue of VG&CE.



I own an NES with over 30 games and an SMS with 12 games. I am definitely going to buy a 16-bit system—either the TurboGrafx-16 or the Sega Genesis. I've had a horrible time deciding but I'm finally leaning toward the Genesis. This is particularly because of your coverage. I saw that you gave considerable info on *Phantasy Star II*. I went through *Phantasy Star* for the SMS, and it was definitely the best game I've ever played. (If possible, please put some info in an upcoming mag on *Phantasy Star II*. I'd greatly appreciate it.)

Keep up the good work!

—Dean Martino
Ghent, New York

We feel you made the right choice by picking VG&CE, Dean. You seem to agree that our magazine is the one to look at for news and information on electronic gaming, and our size has gone up (particularly around the holiday season, when all of our advertisers used their ads to try and convince you to buy their products). All this and still only $2.95!

Of course, we can't guarantee that VG&CE will always be that inexpensive, but we will try to continue as the most affordable videogame publication. As the cost of paper and printing goes up—in addition to any overtime charges a certain editor causes by bringing in new stories at deadline—the cost of making the magazine goes up as well. We'll hold off raising the cover price as long as we can, because we know that you need to save every penny you can so you can buy more games and systems!

Thanks again for your support, Dean.

DEVELOPING AN INTEREST

Dear VG&CE:

I made an "impulse buy" of your January 1990 edition from a newsstand and found it very interesting. I recently bought a personal computer and am interested in exploring computer games as a hobby.

Your two articles on the ingredients of successful games were interesting. My question is this: Do you have any information on software development tools available for animation and digital sound?

—Steven Gray
Ft. Worth, Texas

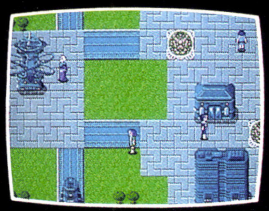
We're glad you like our magazine, Steven, but we really aren't the best place to turn for detailed information on development. A good route to developing games is to first learn programming, which will also help you understand the workings of the computer you own. Going to your local bookstore will usually provide you with a wide selection of books covering programming and the brand of computer you own—an important tool when you consider that each computer is designed with different capabilities.

The final step is to come up with some ideas for games that you think will be popular and maybe even create a video taped demonstration of the game play. At that point, you could try contacting some of the software houses to see if they would be interested in seeing your work. Good luck.

UNTIL NOW YOU NEEDED A COMPUTER TO PLAY AN ADVENTURE GAME AS ADVANCED AS PHANTASY STAR II.

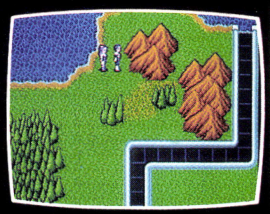
NOW YOU DON'T.

Screen 1. The heroine Alis strikes at a monster seen in your dream.

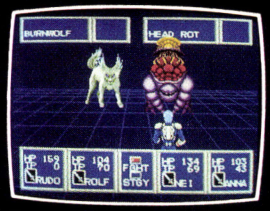


Screen 2. Your party explores the inner city and discovers the Control Tower.

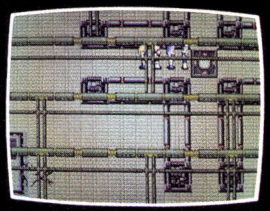
Screen 3. In shops, you buy some critical equipment you will need in your quest.



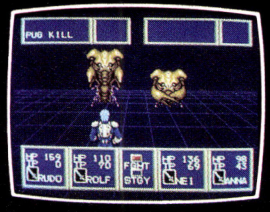
Screen 4. Carefully explore the wilderness outside the city on the planet Mota.



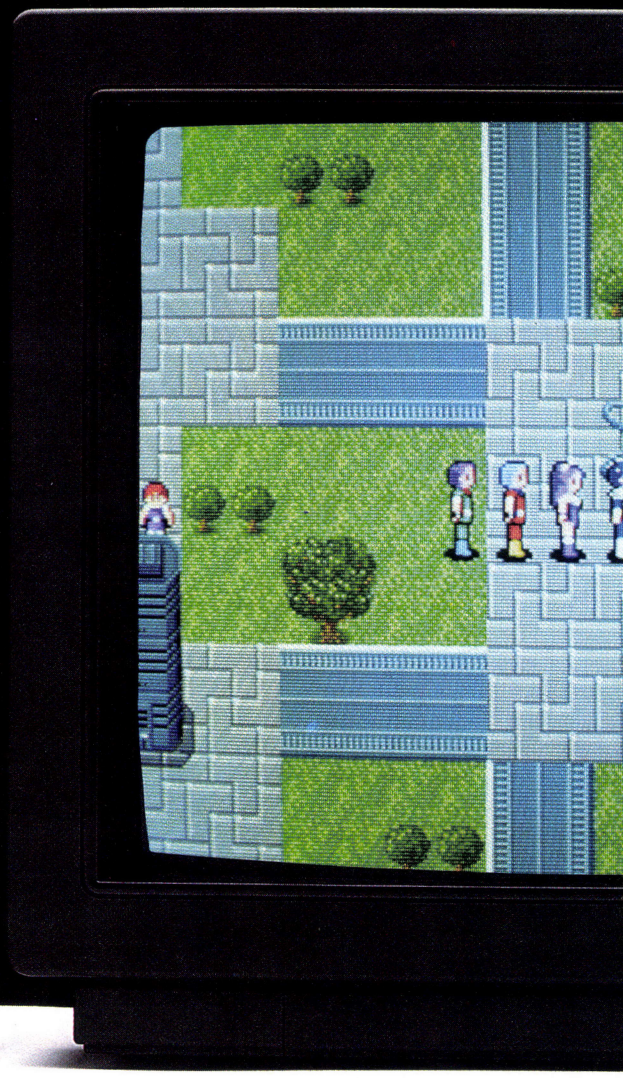
Screen 5. Burnwolf and Head Rot are mutant monsters you must destroy to succeed.



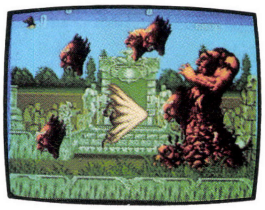
Screen 6. In the dungeons below the city your search is constantly beset by monsters.



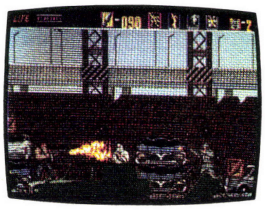
Screen 7. Pug, an evil foe, keeps you from your appointed rounds and possibly success.



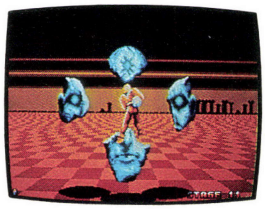
Golden Axe™



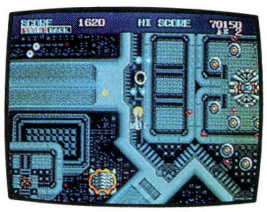
Altered Beast™



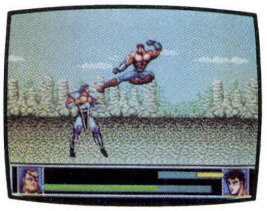
The Revenge of Shinobi™



Space Harrier II™

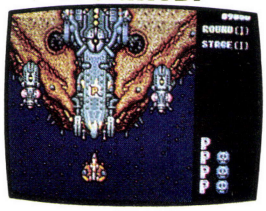


Thunder Force II™



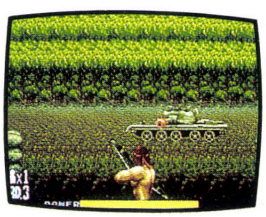
Last Battle™

Arnold Palmer Tournament Golf™



Truxton®

Ghouls 'n Ghosts™



Rambo III®

Altered Beast,™ the Sega® arcade hit, comes with the Genesis system. TeleGenesis™ Modem, Power Base Converter™ and other games sold separately. Sega and Genesis are registered trademarks of Sega of America, Inc. Ghouls 'n Ghosts and Forgotten Worlds are licensed trademarks of Capcom, Inc. Rambo III is a registered trademark of Carolco International N.V. Thunder Force II is a trademark of Techno Soft. Zoom! is a trademark of Discovery Software International, Inc. Truxton is a copyright of Toaplan Co., Ltd. Power Base Converter, TeleGenesis and all other game titles are trademarks of Sega of America, Inc.

Welcome to the ultimate adventure game. Phantasy Star II for the 16-bit Genesis system features the biggest memory (6 mega) videogame cartridge to date. With 19 multi-level maze dungeons and 9 separate cities to explore, you'll be glad that we've included a 110 page book filled with maps and hints to help you on your journey.

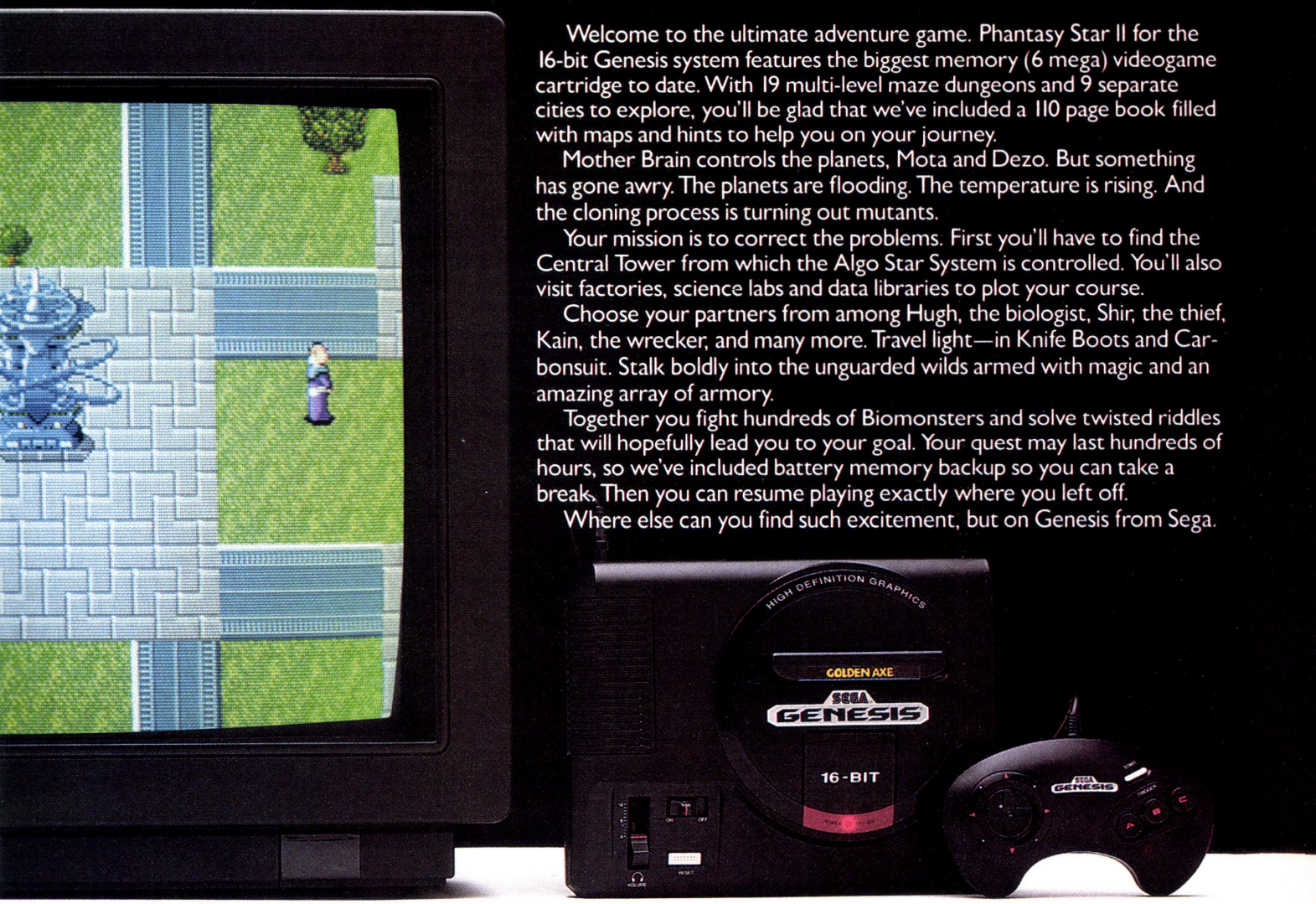
Mother Brain controls the planets, Mota and Dezo. But something has gone awry. The planets are flooding. The temperature is rising. And the cloning process is turning out mutants.

Your mission is to correct the problems. First you'll have to find the Central Tower from which the Algo Star System is controlled. You'll also visit factories, science labs and data libraries to plot your course.

Choose your partners from among Hugh, the biologist, Shir, the thief, Kain, the wrecker, and many more. Travel light—in Knife Boots and Carbonsuit. Stalk boldly into the unguarded wilds armed with magic and an amazing array of armory.

Together you fight hundreds of Biomonsters and solve twisted riddles that will hopefully lead you to your goal. Your quest may last hundreds of hours, so we've included battery memory backup so you can take a break. Then you can resume playing exactly where you left off.

Where else can you find such excitement, but on Genesis from Sega.

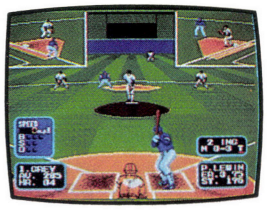


Super Hang-On™

Zoom!™

World Championship Soccer™

Super Thunder Blade™



Tommy Lasorda Baseball™

Forgotten Worlds™

SEGA®

GENESIS®

We Bring The Arcade Experience Home.

TeleGenesis Modem and Games: These products are planned for future availability, and are sold separately. Each player needs a Genesis console, TeleGenesis modem and TeleGenesis game cartridge to play.

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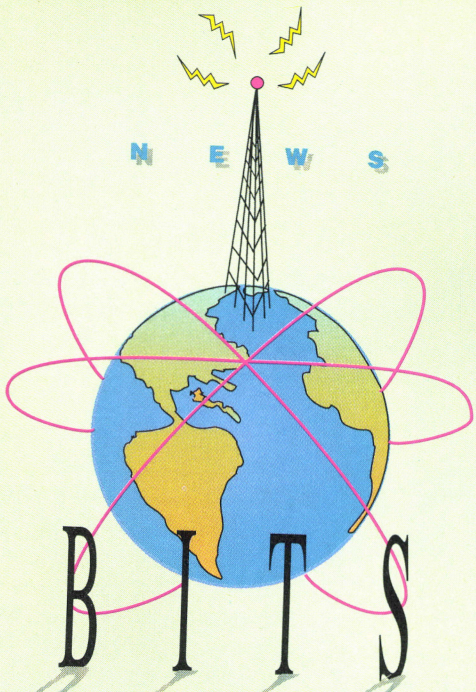
CIRCLE #107 ON READER SERVICE CARD.



Epyx Reforms, to Publish Again

After a late-1989 announcement that the company would suspend publishing activities, Epyx surprised the computing community with a complete turnaround that should keep the hits coming for some time to come.

A change in management named longtime board member William P. Lanphear IV as chairman and chief executive officer and software veteran John Brazier as president. According to Robert Botch, vice-president of marketing & product development, the company has trimmed down the size of its operations, secured new financing and started work on several new products that will appear later this year.

Epyx announced it will publish three new titles for the Sega Genesis System, including *California Games II,* which should reach market mid-year. The restructured company is also developing three new titles for the Atari Lynx, which will bring the total of Epyx-created Lynx titles to nine.

This regrouping of Epyx's forces makes possible the continuation of one of computer gaming's oldest and certainly most respected publishing houses. The "new" management team is actually a reuniting of the team that led the software company through its most successful years.

Nintendo Ends Allocation System

The year 1990 should prove to be the most bountiful year to date, in terms of NES cartridge availability. Announcing that the chip shortage has ended, Nintendo advised the licensed third-party NES publishers at the start of the new year that the company has halted the allocation system.

Under the allocation system in effect up to that point, publishers of NES-compatible cartridges were only allowed to manufacture specified numbers of copies of their games.

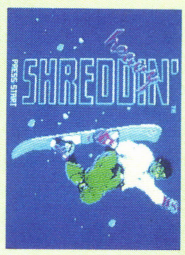
The computer-chip shortages of the last few years had been cited as the reason for Nintendo's enforcement of the allocation system. This led to shortages of software, as companies were unable to manufacture sufficient copies of hits to satisfy the market.

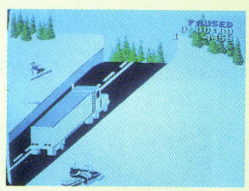
Companies were similarly restricted in the number of new titles they could release.

Parker Brothers Returns

Parker Brothers, best known for its line of family entertainment and board-game products, returned to electronic gaming with the publication of an NES-compatible cartridge and a computer game. These are the company's first new electronic-entertainment titles since its departure at the end of the first golden age of video games.

John Call, director of marketing, explained why his company chose this time to reenter the field: "The marketplace provided the opportunity. We're not a game company, we're an entertainment company. The growth of the PC software market gave us the market."



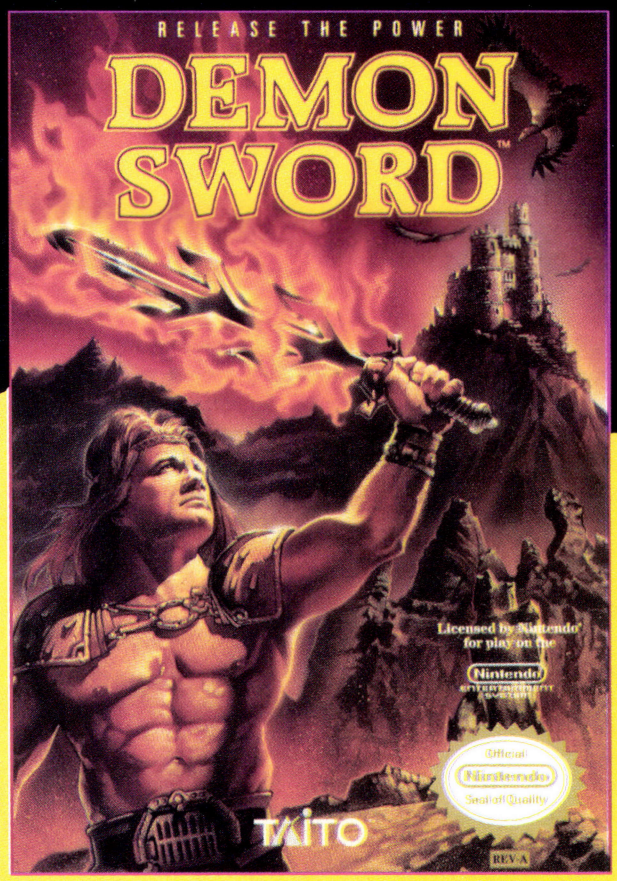


Heavy Shreddin, a sports action game (developed by Absolute Entertainment) based on snowboarding, will be released for play on the NES. As each on-screen hotdogger travels down the slopes on a big board, they compete in slalom, downhill, halfpipe, mogul and backwoods events, as well as shredding some daredevil stunts, including waterfall and ski-chalet leaps. According to Call, the game "allows you to be more of a kid."

Parker's second release is designed for IBM and compatible computers. *Trivial Pursuit* re-creates the famous board game and allows four players to compete against each other or against the six built-in animated characters. Call explained that the game can be customized to suit the player. "If you're not good at history, for example, there are 30 different categories. You could customize it so there are six sports categories or six history—or subjects can be randomly selected. There's also a bias feature that allows for handicapping if you're playing against kids. You can play individually or against the computer. The AI (artificial intelligence) of the computer opponents are based on the categories, with probabilities on a sliding scale. Also, when the player doesn't know an answer, it doesn't appear [which aids replayability]. There are 4,000 questions, and the computer always 'shuffles' them so the order is different each time."

Parker had been absent from the high-tech entertainment field for some time. During the heyday of the Atari 2600, Parker's best-known video games were

MASTER THE POWER



IN A LAND OF IMPOSSIBLE EVILS . . .

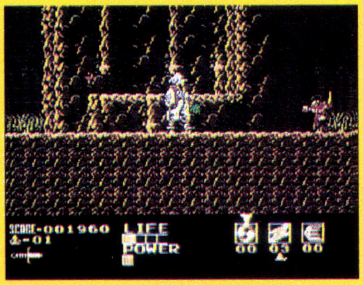
the classic struggle between good and evil comes to life. Mixed with magic and the latest computer technology, a spell-binding game for your Nintendo Entertainment System® is born!

As the hero warrior Victar, you will battle Wizards, Troglodytes, and Undead Souls. Master 7 levels and 3 worlds in your quest to conquer the demons of the Dark Lord. Traverse chasms of fire and mountains of doom to confront the fiendish Gatekeeper.

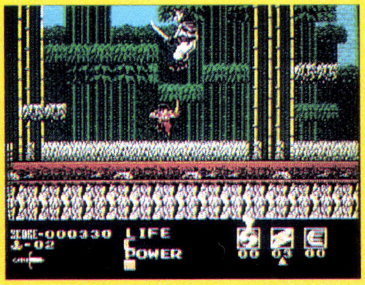
RISK IT ALL

With cunning and skill you wield the ancient and broken Demon Sword.™ To defeat the evil forces ruling the land, you must recover the Sword's missing pieces and restore its mystical power. The journey is long and the way is hard. Gather your courage, grasp your blade, and release the power that is yours to control!

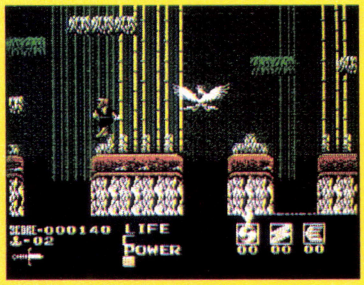
Actual Nintendo Entertainment System Screens



Beware the wrath of the Old Wizard of Cedar Mountain.



Brave the broken bridges and terrifying chasms of Bamboo Forest.



The magic of the Phoenix can save your life!

TAITO™

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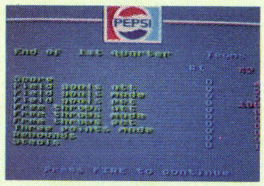
CIRCLE #108 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

*Frogger, Q*Bert* and *The Empire Strikes Back.*

Pepsi Cola Hits the Spot

Pepsi and Tradewest reached an agreement by which the Pepsi logo will be seen in a spot normally untouched by advertising. *Magic Johnson's Fast Break* features the Pepsi logo, in what is one of the first ads ever seen in a video game.

The Pepsi logo appears when the game starts, in the opening title sequence. It is also visible as a sign on the back of the arena and on the scoreboard.



Pepsi is known as a pioneer in placing ads in new mediums. The company was one of the first to put advertising on video, with their logo in the video release of *Top Gun.*

Byron Cook, president of Tradewest, commented on the coup: "By joining with Pepsi in this venture, we've added a new dimension of realism to the electronic basketball arena. We also have probably opened the door on a significant new advertising medium."

Magic Johnson's Fast Break is a full-court, four-player NBA basketball game designed for play on the Nintendo Entertainment System.

Top Coin-Ops of December 1989

Figures courtesy of *Replay* Magazine, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos

1. *Hard Drivin'* by Atari
2. *Cyberball 2072* by Atari
3. *S.T.U.N. Runner* by Atari
4. *Off Road* by Leland
5. *Crime Fighters* by Konami
6. *All American Football* by Leland
7. *Operation Thunderbolt* by Taito
8. *Final Lap* by Atari
9. *Super Monaco GP* by Sega
10. *Team Quarterback* by Leland

Best Coin-Op Software

1. *WWF Superstars* by American Technos
2. *Vs. Crime Fighters* by Konami
3. *E.S.W.A.T.* by Sega
4. *Caliber 50* by Romstar
5. *Golden Axe* by Sega
6. *U. N. Squadron* by Capcom
7. *Crime City* by Taito
8. *Willow* by Capcom
9. *Champ. Bowling* by Romstar
10. *Arch Rivals* by Bally Midway

Best New Uprights

1. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* by Konami
2. *Big Run by* Jaleco
3. *Rambo III* by Romstar
4. *Midnight Resistance* by Data East
5. *Super Masters* by Sega

Populous Gains New Grounds

Electronic Arts introduced an accessory disk for their hit title *Populous,* which provides new landscapes to the world. Designed by Bullfrog Productions, *Populous: The Promised Lands* includes five new environments that can be used to build new worlds.

• The Wild West is a frontier landscape. Cowboys and Indians battle for territory, building forts and pueblos and using bullets and arrows, respectively, against each other.

• Revolution Française pits the aristocracy against the peasants as they fight in castles and near the Arc de Triomphe.

• Blockland provides building blocks for landscape.

• Silly Land features aliens in a world with distorted geometry, building mirrored cubes, spheres and pyramids on a checkerboard landscape.

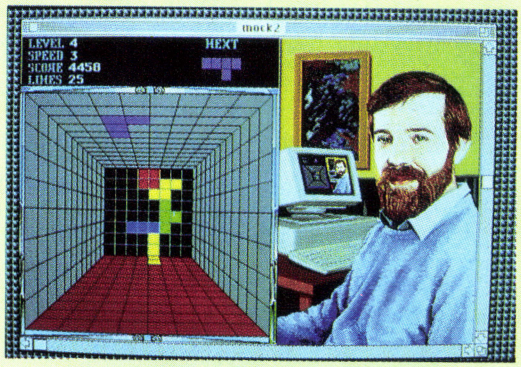
• The Bit Plains is a battle of computers against a computer-paper background.

Populous: The Promised Lands retails for $14.95 for Amiga and IBM PC (and compatibles).

Data East Reveals Fantasy

Data East, a company best known for its arcade-style action games, unveiled a new line of fantasy role-playing entertainments for IBM PCs and Amiga computers. Two titles will be introduced under the Draconian label early this year, both featuring 3-D graphics and realistic sound effects.

Drakkhen requires players to defend the kingdom of the dragons from certain destruction. The player controls four adventurers, traveling individually or as a group, in a search for eight jewels that are the key to restoring the rightful dragon to the throne. A special feature tracks the passage of time: The player witnesses sunrises, sunsets, moon and stars and must make game choices based on the time of day. The fantasy world is populated with fire-breathing dragons, elves, ogres and trolls, over 200 spells that are each visualized on screen, 150 monsters and over 240 rooms.



Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess, for Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC computers, requires the player to assume the role of Raven, a hero who might save the world from the sci-mutants that conquered the planet. To rescue the priestess and save the day, the player is armed with special sci-powers such as solar eyes to see in the dark, sticky fingers to walk on walls and ceilings and psychic powers for mind reading. Using these gives Raven a chance to complete five puzzles that comprise the key to success.

Tetris Designer Visits Vegas

Alexey Pazhitnov, Soviet designer of Tetris and Welltris, got an opportunity to see firsthand just how his creations were received in this country. The Russian computer expert visited the United States and attended the Winter Consumer Electronic Show in Las Vegas as a guest of Spectrum Holobyte. There he met and talked with industry leaders, other designers and news media, including the editorial staff of VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT.

Pazhitnov is a member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. His main work there includes sound/voice recognition, CAD/CAM art and artificial intelligence. He began designing games "to learn more about computers and their programming languages." What started as a sideline developed into an

SHARK ATTACK!

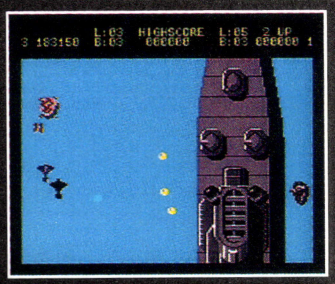
Only you and your P-40 Tiger Shark stand between your buddies and oblivion. Trapped behind enemy lines, the enemy is trying to nail you with everything they've got—fighters, tanks, battleships, anti-aircraft guns...

But you can handle it. You're the best stick man in the sky. So check your six o'clock and man your guns. The Sky Shark's got the moves if you've got the guts.

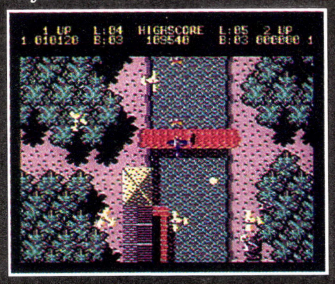
"Sky Shark...moves so fast, the enemy targets are so numerous, and the graphics so vivid..."
—Game Players Guide to Nintendo Games

"...a scrolling shoot-'em-up that combines furious action with good graphics to provide an exciting gaming experience."
—Video Games and Computer Entertainment

Actual Nintendo Entertainment System Screens

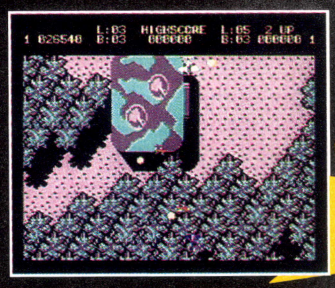


Battleships track you and lay down a carpet of deadly fire!



Danger below! Watch out for a sudden ambush!

Company at 12 o'clock. Get them before they get you!



Keep an eye out for heavy flak from camouflaged guns...

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CIRCLE #109 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

international accomplishment when *Tetris* and its sequel *Welltris* captivated the Western world.

Pazhitnov speaks excellent English, perhaps due to his wife's occupation as an English teacher. As he looked around the artificial environment of America's favorite resort city, he mused about the difference in life between the two nations. According to the Russian computer whiz, electronic games are not widely played in that country, since computers and video-game equipment have virtually no access into Soviet homes.

Pazhitnov designed 15 games during the past five years, but only two have reached the West. *Tetris* was his third or fourth game, and there were several others completed between that one and its sequel, *Welltris*. He is currently working on other titles and hopes to be able to visit America again in the future.

Distributor Shuts Doors

Computer Software Services (CSS), a well-known distributor of home computer games, has ceased operations. The announcement came in a terse press release distributed just prior to this year's Winter Consumer Electronics Show.

For consumers, the exit of CSS means that entertainment software for some home systems, especially the Atari ST and the Commodore 64, will be harder to find this year than last. The company carried many titles for both systems that its larger competitors wouldn't handle.

Taito Launches Two Newsletters

Taito is the latest video- and computer-game publisher to introduce a player-oriented newsletter. In fact, the company has launched not one but two publications: one for their NES products and the other to support computer software.

Both versions of *The Taito Times* are large, colorful four-page tabloids with information about current and future Taito products. The first issue of the Nintendo players' edition features an interview with Dr. Arkanoid, Taito's hooded playtester, details of the company's "Say Rap! Say Taito! Say Yo!" campaign and previews of new products. Among the features in the software version are a close-up on the IBM PC, coverage of *Rambo III* and the debut of Taito's "Just Say Nope to Dope" drive.

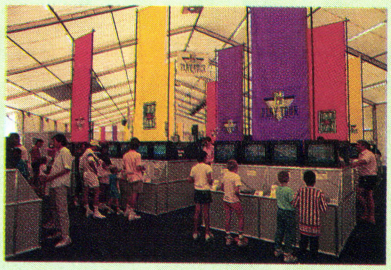
Copies of either or both newsletters are available by writing Taito. The address for U.S. players is: P.O. Box 1439, Bothell, WA 98011. Canadians should write to P.O. Box 16087, 3017 Mountain Highway, North Vancouver, B.C. V7J 359. Specify NES or software edition.

NEC Playtour Challenge Winners Announced

NEC took the TurboGrafx-16 on a 13-city tour to give kids a sneak preview of the system and its software. Five Turbo Vans, outfitted with lift-up side panels, visited high traffic spots such as shopping malls and Expos to let kids get hands-on experience with the games. NEC provided other entertainments, including skateboard and BMX demonstrations, music videos projected on large screens and disk jockeys doing live remote broadcasts from the events.

NEC estimates that approximately 7,200 people competed, and over 50,000 played the games without entering the competition. High-scoring finalists competed on the intense *Blazing Lazers*, and each scored over 200,000 points during the five-minute heat.

The finalist in each city won a TurboGrafx-16 system. Five grand-prize winners each won an NEC TurboCD package (valued at $399 each), an NEC monitor and a



Vision Street Wear skateboard. Grand-prize winners of the event were Jim Hakola, 17, Lakewood, California (VG&CE, *News Bits*, January 1990); Scott Jones, 20, Elgin, Illinois; Larry Skow, 16, Northboro, Massachusetts; Alan Bilodeau, 14, Trumbull, Connecticut; and John Balsley, 23, Lebanon, New Jersey.

German Amigans Gather

Amiga '89, Germany's first show featuring Commodore's popular system, drew a crowd of nearly 35,000 enthusiastic computerists to Cologne. AmiEXPO Associates has already announced another three-day event for users of the increasingly popular Amiga in November. Seventy-eight hardware and software companies, 18 from North America, created an exhibit hall full of the latest and greatest gear for Amigans.

"The great success of Amiga '89 clearly reflects both the popularity of the Amiga in Germany and the strong commitment Commodore is making in the European marketplace," stated Alexander Glos, general partner of AmiEXPO.

The Amiga had lagged behind arch rival Atari ST through early 1989, but reports are that the Amiga has now caught, and in some European countries, passed, the ST. The popularity of the Amiga is expected to result in more overseas game development for the system and an increase in the number of imported Amiga titles in this country during the second half of1990.

Cinemaware Backs TurboGrafx-16

Leading computer-game publisher Cinemaware, which has already dabbled in the home video-game market with titles for both Nintendo and Sega, is poised to make a major move into the TurboGrafx-16 field through a landmark agreement with NEC Technologies, Inc. Cinemaware plans to produce both TurboChip game cards and CD-ROM games to support the recently introduced peripheral for the dedicated video game system.

The first CD title will be *It Came From the Desert*. This interactive movie, inspired by such 1950s monster movies as *Them* was previously issued in a version for home computers. Also scheduled for CD is an edition of *Lords of the Rising Sun*, a big hit for Cinemaware on home computers in 1989. *It Came From the Desert* will be released this coming fall, with *Lords of the Rising Sun* slated for spring 1991.

Cinemaware's popular TV Sports series is coming to the TurboGrafx-16 as TurboChip game cards. According to Cinemaware President Bob Jacob, *TV Sports: Football*

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and *TV Sports: Basketball* utilize a previously untapped capability of the system that allows up to five participants to play simultaneously. The two other contests in the line, *TV Sports: Baseball* and *TV Sports: Boxing* are for one or two players.

Ken Wirt, NEC's vice-president of home entertainment, believes this major deal will help NEC ensure a wide variety of game types for its console, which was introduced late in 1989. "Players like a wide variety of games," Wirt said, "and we plan to have something for everyone. You're going to be seeing truly innovative games—games you never thought possible for a home video-game system—coming to the TurboGrafx-16 system in 1990."

Jackson Moonwalks Into Games

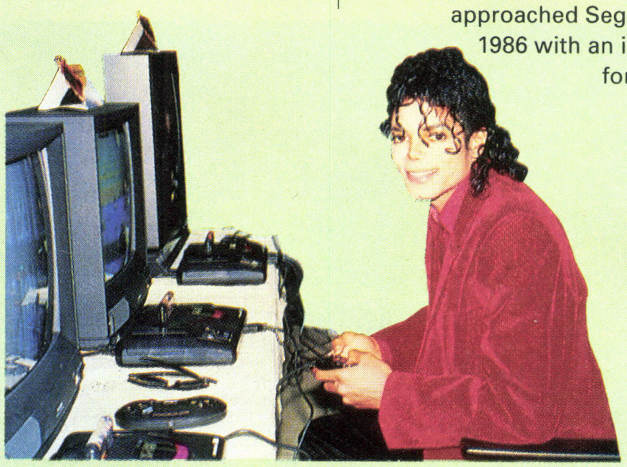
Michael Jackson is bringing his record-breaking success to electronic gaming. Sega is working with the singer on a coin-op for the arcades and a home video-game cartridge for its Genesis unit. Keypunch Software is readying *Moonwalker*, a revised and upgraded U.S. edition of a European title, for all popular brands of home computer.

The Sega arcade and home games are based on the videos "Moonwalker" and "Smooth Criminal." Titled *Moonwalker*, it features detailed animation based on footage of the actual video. Jackson's "Bad," "Beat It" and "Dirty Diana" provide the musical background for the action. Both the coin-op and the cartridge will be released this fall.

A longtime video-game fan, Michael Jackson has a large collection of arcade machines in his home. He approached Sega in 1986 with an idea for a game, and the result of this coproduction is *Moonwalker*.

"This is an exciting moment in our 35-year history," says Michael Katz, president of Sega's Consumer Products Division. "Michael Jackson wanted to be involved in a fun and high-quality video game, and Sega is uniquely qualified to be Michael's partner as a leader in both home and arcade video-game systems."

The computer game *Moonwalker*, already fairly successful in Great Britain, is being enhanced and improved for a spring 1990 release by Minneapolis-based Keypunch Software. "It is an exciting action game featuring Michael Jackson," says Bob Devine, Keypunch president, "but we didn't want to rush it to America before making it even better."



VG&CE Presents Award to Lasorda

In recognition of *Tommy Lasorda Baseball*'s achievement as Best Sports Simulation Video Game of 1989 (VG&CE, February 1990), VG&CE's Executive Editor Andy Eddy and Assistant Editor Donn Nauert presented Los Angeles Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda with a plaque rewarding Sega's *Tommy Lasorda Baseball* for the Genesis. The exchange took place at Sega's gigantic booth at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, which was held January 6-9, 1990, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Falcon Flies for Forces; Simulators to be Linked

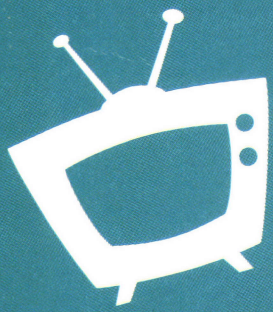
Spectrum HoloByte's F-16 fighter simulation is flying high for the armed forces as the result of an exclusive seven-year contract between Perceptronics, Inc. and Sphere, Inc. According to the terms of the agreement, Sphere's Spectrum HoloByte division will furnish the software for the ASAT (Avionics Situational Awareness Trainer) line of F-16 training products.

The ASAT line is composed of seven trainers, including a Basic Tabletop Trainer, Advanced Instrument and Emergency Procedures Cockpit Trainers, and a Cockpit Trainer with a MiniDome. Each features full-color displays, high-fidelity stick and throttle, scenario review and reprogrammable flight and weapon parameters. Each is modular, so more features can be added, and all are compatible for networking. According to Phil Handley, Perceptronics product manager, up to a dozen ASAT trainers can be linked so pilots can work cooperatively as teams.

Gilman Louie, CEO of Sphere, explained the military's attraction to the program: "When they saw the technology available in Falcon, they realized it would be possible to build trainers at a fraction of the cost of traditional military simulators."

Louie also revealed that Spectrum Holobyte will release special software later this year to let users link the company's flight, tank, submarine and destroyer programs into one massive simulation. This will make possible the re-creation of battles on a scale unmatched up to this point.

GET WITH THE PROGRAM!



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CIRCLE #111 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Publisher Debuts Video Gamers Club

Capcom is just about to launch an official Capcom Craze Club for video-game players, and a promotional piece highlighting the club is currently packed into all products from that company. Capcom also plans to send a direct mail flyer introducing the club to all NES owners.

Club members will receive a poster (either *DuckTales, MegaMan, Strider* or *Code Name: Viper*), a *MegaMan* comic strip, a catalog of Capcom memorabilia and a Capcom newsletter. In addition, various sweepstakes and contests for Capcomers should keep the action lively. The cost for membership is $3.95.

Edu-Game Called "Next Generation" Product

According to Bill Dismore, president of The Learning Company, their new action adventure game just released for children ages 8 to 11 is a "breakthrough product" for IBM PC/Tandy and compatible computer systems. *Super Solvers Midnight Rescue!* is designed to help kids build reading and thinking skills through the use of leading-edge graphics, animation, music and special sound effects that enhance the game play and theme.

"The ability to comprehend written information and use it to reach conclusions is an important cornerstone of learning," explained Dinsmore. "The breakthrough design of this program combines challenge, fun, ease of use and educational content."

It seems the Master of Mischief, Morty Maxwell, is trying to cover over Shady Glen School with a coat of disappearing paint. Since he is disguised as one of his five robot helpers, the player must try to locate him through clues found in notes, letters and newspaper articles or by taking the robots' pictures with a magic camera that reveals hidden facts. Players earn points for reading the right clues and by having film left in the camera and time on the clock after identifying the right robot as Morty Maxwell. Every victory moves the player up through eight levels, each filled with faster robots and more hidden facts.

According to Dinsmore, *Super Solvers Midnight Rescue!* is a nonviolent game. Players use magic, a camera, pie throws, marbles and other objects found in the adventure, along with over 200 readings from posters, newsletters, books and other tips, recombined in each new game to keep the action fresh.

Capcom's Children's Corner to Go National

The reception of the Capcom Children's Corner on the West Coast was so good that Capcom plans a national rollout in 1990. The video-game company launched the first installation in August 1989 at Children's Hospital of San Francisco, at a star-studded dedication that included Paul Kantner from the Jefferson Airplane. The second Capcom Children's Corner was dedicated at Children's Hospital at Standard, where Pierce Holt and Michael Carter of the San Francisco 49ers joined the festivities.

Capcom plans to establish Capcom Children's Corners throughout the country in major metropolitan areas. Each location will receive a donation of 36 video games and three Nintendo Entertainment Systems, plus portable oak carts to house the equipment. The value of the donation is estimated at $5,000 per hospital. The next four locations to receive the donations will be Los Angeles, Chicago, New York and Boston.

NEWS FLASH

At the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, VG&CE had an opportunity to see an advanced prototype of the "TurboGrafx Portable" (see artist's representation below) though a name hasn't been set for the product.

Sources say that the unit will be released in the U.S. before it's released in Japan; a first for the latest generation of video-game products.

The fully playable prototype—running *Blazing Lazers* and *Bonk's Adventure*—was extremely impressive and gave us a good idea of how the machine will work as a game unit when it's finished. We're confident that the display will be just as crisp with the TV tuner attached. The screen was somewhat smaller than we would have expected, but there is the possibility that the designers may increase it given that there is currently a black border running around the screen.

The resolution of the display was good enough to enable us to read the characters on the power-ups in Blazing Lazers, which is a good representation of how detailed it is. We were truly in awe of the possibilities this device offers, especially if all the options that are being looked at can be pulled off: an optional tuner that will turn the unit into a portable television and jacks that would allow the output to be run to an external display.

VG&CE will undoubtedly be giving you more information on this revolutionary machine in future issues as we get it. No date for release has been firmly set, but you can expect it to be available by the year's end.

The response to Pipe Dream™ has been admirably restrained.

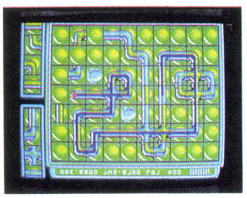
Fortunately, it's not necessary to physically restrain *everyone* who contracts *Pipe Dream* fever. But frankly, we're surprised that the Surgeon General hasn't ordered us to put a warning on the box.

Pipe Dream is Lucasfilm's fast-flowing new computer game of skill, strategy, and plumbing. And while the devilishly simple concept makes *Pipe Dream* easy to learn, it's maddeningly tough to master.

Imagine playing chess in the middle of a pie fight.

Pipe Dream's objective is simple enough: Just piece together a pipeline from plumbing parts that appear on the side of the screen. But after eight seconds, the flood gates open. The plot thickens. And quickens.

The better you get, the trickier it gets. But one false move, and you're swamped!



Two plumbers can play this game.

Suddenly, you're scrambling to lay pipe ahead of the flow. You've got to think strategically. But act instinctively. One wrong move, brief hesitation, or misplaced pipe part and you're sunk in a sea of soggy sewage!

Learn why plumbers earn $75 an hour.

Of course the better you get, the faster the flow. And the 36 levels get progressively trickier, with special bonus tubes worth extra points. Reservoir sections that slow the flow of sludge. Unexpected obstacles appear. So do mandatory finishing points. And other trials to drive the deftest pipelayer daffy.

Choose a *Pipe Dream* play mode to suit your skill: basic, expert, or two-plumber challenge. And when no one's looking, use the training mode to glimpse advanced level screens that you might otherwise never see.

Test your plumbing skills before you buy.

For a sample version of *Pipe Dream* look on specially marked boxes of Kao diskettes, or send $2.00 for postage and handling to: Pipe Dream Offer, Kao Infosystems Company, 41444 Christy St., Fremont, CA 94538. State diskette size (3½″ or 5¼″) and system type (PC or Macintosh only).

Once you've contracted *Pipe Dream* fever, move up to the full-blown version and really test your pipe-fitting prowess. If you're lucky, the only thing they'll have to restrain will be your enthusiasm.

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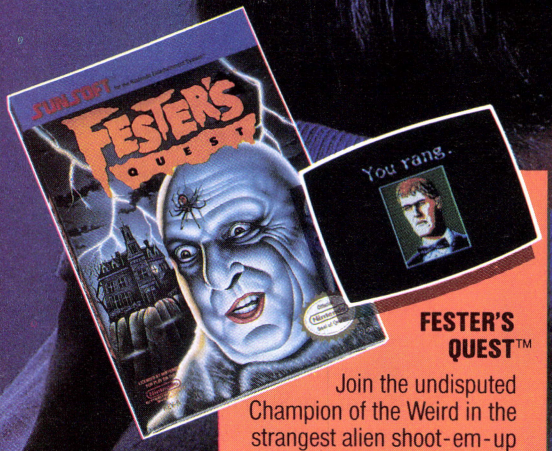

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Have you ever had major trouble with a game, but found a hidden tip that helped you out? If you have some continues, special modes or sound tests that you want to pass along, just put them on a piece of paper, and send them to VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, ATTN: *Easter Egg Hunt*. The author of each new tip we use will receive $10. Write neatly, and be sure to include your name and address!

Tips are graded on a scale of one to five joysticks. The more joysticks colored in, the more valuable the hint! Here's a key to the abbreviations:

U = Up

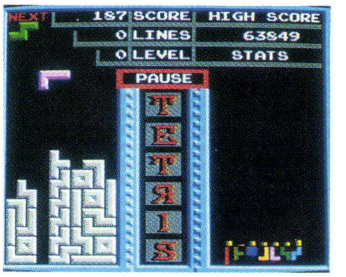
D = Down

L = Left

R = Right

A = "A" button

B = "B" button



TETRIS

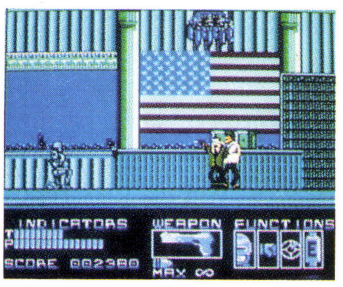
(Tengen for the NES)

If you were one of the few lucky buyers of Tengen's *Tetris*, which is destined for glory as a collector's item, you can take a piece and convert it into a long, red piece. Simply pause the game, then press U, U, D, D, L, R, L, R, B, A. The effect always seems to work on the first try, but after that it's hit-and-miss. Thanks and some bucks to Justin Lee of Saint-Laurent, Quebec, Canada.

ROBOCOP

(Data East for the NES)

Having trouble getting through Detroit with your favorite mechanical cop?



Well, Michael Guillot of DeRidder, Louisiana, offers this continue to help you out. When the game-over screen comes up, hit A, B, SELECT and START simultaneously, then pick continue from the menu. You'll start at the save level you were last on. Thanks, Michael!

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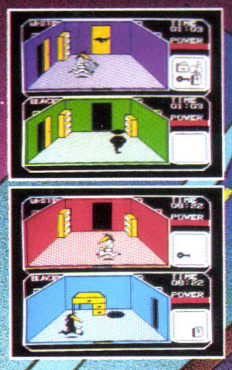

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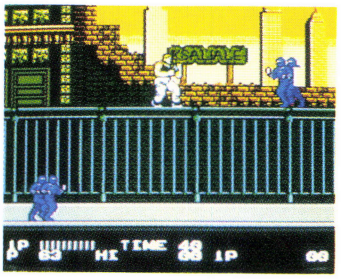
CIRCLE #114 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

BLAZING LAZERS

(NEC for the TurboGrafx-16)

R. Stewart of Cleveland, Ohio, recently sent a list of tips that contained this difficulty-select mode. If you hold down the SELECT button while alternately hitting the 1 and 2 buttons, the screen will change to a starscape with the words "Normal Dog." This can be changed to "Hard Human" or, with further toggling of the 1 and 2 buttons, "Super Mania" and "God of Game." Exit from this screen by holding down RUN and hitting SELECT.

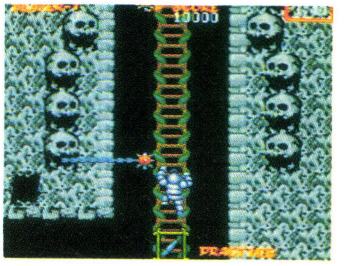
Good luck with that last level, friends!



BAD DUDES

(Data East for the NES)

Three men aren't enough for you to get through this martial arts marathon? North Canton, Ohio's Danny Miller has an egg that will garner you 64 men at the start of the game! At the title screen, take controller No. 2 and press B, A, D, U, D, U, then hit START on controller #1. Here's $10 for that hot tip, Danny!



GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS

(Sega for the Genesis)

Xavier Guzman of El Paso, Texas, has discovered a level select for this stimulating Genesis cart. From the title screen, hit U, D, L, R repeatedly until the music ends. To select a level, simultaneously hold down A, B, C, START and the following on the directional control:

U= Stage 2,
D = Stage 3,
L = Stage 4,
R = Stage 5,
and R+D = the end of the game against the Prince of Darkness.

Great job, Xavier.

(continued on page 96)

"YOU STAND AT THE EDGE OF A DEEP CHASM. FROM THE DARKNESS BELOW RISE THE SCREAMS OF THE UNDEAD."

Can you outwit and overcome the thoroughly-evil Warlock Lord? His mysterious spell holds Castle Shadowgate captive. Dozens of hidden pitfalls and nasty entities lurk in every corner.

Probe along menacing stone corridors looking for hidden passageways. Discover mysterious artifacts in dark chambers. Clues are there for those bold enough, and wise enough. *Torches. Keys. Gemstones.*

Slay a dragon, cross a river of fire. But be careful. A wrong move could bring your quest to an untimely end.

A whole world of options are at your command with dynamic graphics to bring the dark mysteries of the Middle Ages to life.

The question is...are you up to the challenge of Castle Shadowgate?

KEMCO ▲ SEIKA

Shadowgate™

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VIDEO GAME REVIEWS

Faxanadu

NINTENDO

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($54.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	7
Playability	8
Overall	7

In *Faxanadu*, a new adventure game from Nintendo, you take up arms and venture forth into the World Tree, a strange place that has been the victim of a meteor attack. The meteors, called down by the Evil One who lives in the Evil Place, have brought with them every nasty creature imaginable and have also unleashed upon the citizens of the World Tree a magic so powerful that it's even caused the water supplies to dry up.

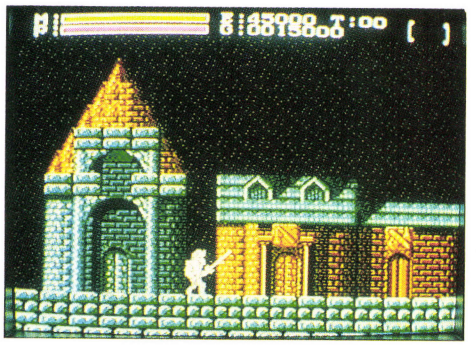
Similar to adventure games like *Zelda II*, the player must make his way through many scrolling scenes as he travels from town to town in search of better weapons and supplies. Unlike *Zelda II*, all the scenes in *Faxanadu* are side views. There is no overhead view map.

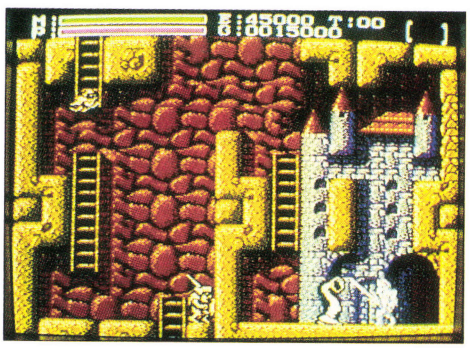
Still, the game boasts all the trappings of an intriguing adventure: secret objects, challenging quests, magic spells and beastly enemies. In addition, you may choose from a variety of weapons, armor and shields. The more expensive a piece of equipment, the more effective it is.

Because your quest for the Evil One will be a long one, the password feature allows you to begin a game where you last left off. The amount of gold you have when you begin depends on the level of your character, which can be raised by gaining experience points. Much of your playing time will be spent battling creatures in order to increase your experience and gold. In fact, each stage of the game is begun by fighting until you have enough gold to buy the equipment you need and enough experience to take on the challenges of the next quest.

Throughout the World Tree are towns in which shops offer needed items for sale. The hardware store buys and sells weapons, armor, magic and other items. There's also a key shop (some doors open only with the right key) and a food shop (food restores your life energy). Most important is the guru's house, in which your level is advanced and your password obtained. In addition, people in houses and saloons are always ready to chat, providing you with a steady stream of clues. Also, the doctor will treat your injuries, allowing you to restore your life and magic energies.

In Nintendo's *Faxanadu* you go up against the Evil One, who has magic so strong that it's caused the water supplies to dry up.





Magical items abound. On your travels, you'll find elixir to restore your magic and life energies, a magical rod to increase your magic's power, a pendant to increase your sword-fighting capabilities, a mattock (like a pick) to destroy stone blocks, winged boots to give you flying abilities, an hour glass to stop time and more.

Faxanadu's graphics vary from average to gorgeous. Some of the later scenes are highly detailed and colorful, depicting huge hidden castles and eerie corridors cut into the branches and trunk of the World Tree. The music is good, although not sensational. The sound effects are unremarkable.

Although *Faxanadu* is simpler and less difficult than *Zelda II*, it does provide its share of adventure. The puzzles are demanding enough to be interesting and easy enough not to be frustrating. The same can be said for the arcade portions of the game. All in all, a well-rounded adventure. Recommended.

—Clayton Walnum

Nintendo of America
4820 150th Ave. NE
Redmond, WA 98052
(206) 882-2040

Roadblasters

MINDSCAPE

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	6
Playability	7
Overall	7

There are many ways to win a race. Be the best driver; build the best car; have the best luck or bring the best gun. What was that? The best *gun*?

Yep. If you can't beat them, don't join them. Instead, blast them

DO NOT ATTEMPT YOUR MISSION UNTIL THE CHOPPERS ARE OVERHEAD, SNIPERS ARE IN POSITION, AND YOUR HOMEWORK'S DONE.

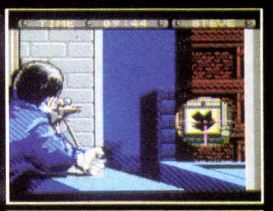
Not doing your homework could be a mistake. Every move you make could jeopardize your fellow rescuers, and those held captive.

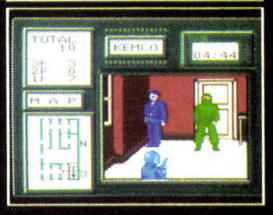
RESCUE: The Embassy Mission. The action comes fast and furious. Itchy-fingered enemy gunmen. A perilous rappel down the sheer face of the Embassy. If you survive that, don't get cocky. You've still got to out-maneuver and out-think your opponents inside and mastermind the escape.

There are 15 levels of difficulty, from "Training Mission" to wickedly-fast "Jupiter Mission." Thrills are delivered in bold strokes, with super high quality graphics and animation.

With *RESCUE: The Embassy Mission,* brainpower is as important as firepower.

KEMCO▲SEIKA





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THE EMBASSY MISSION

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CIRCLE #116 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

off the road. *Roadblasters* from Mindscape takes a traditional racing game, stirs in some fire power and comes up with a fast-action contest that'll make all those other racing games seem dull.

Of course, if you can play dirty, your opponents can too. As you squeal around the track, you'll face not only cars and motorcycles intent on winning, but also gun emplacements determined to shoot you down and road mines that will blast you to Ferrari heaven. In addition, oil spills, which affect only you, spin your car out of control when they are hit.

Luckily, you're not alone against the horde. A hovering aircraft will occasionally provide items that'll increase your fighting and racing power. For example, the nitro inject will zap your car into high speed, the uz cannon (a misspelling of uzi?) allows rapid-fire shooting, the cruise missile vaporizes all enemies on the screen and the electro shield protects you from damage.

Your car, which is controlled by the arrow pad, starts the race with a full tank of gas. As you scream down the track, your fuel decreases, of course. To keep you going, run over colored globes on the track to give your thirsty tank a boost. Many times the fuel globes appear and wait to be scooped up; but some globes (the ones that occasionally appear after you destroy an enemy) keep rolling. You have to catch up with them, which is tricky when you're trying to avoid other obstacles.

As with most racing games, in *Roadblasters* you have a certain amount of time (measured by your fuel) in which to complete the race. While crashing or otherwise getting destroyed slows you down, it doesn't take away a life.

If you make it to the finish line before your fuel runs out, you advance to the next race, each race being more challenging than the previous one. To help you along, you can continue a game twice. In addition, at certain points in the game (including at the beginning), you can skip over levels.

The screen display is typical for this type of game. Your car's image stays in the bottom center of the screen while the scenery moves toward you, the background shifting left or right as you steer. The game play is smooth, and the controls are more responsive than in many other racing games.

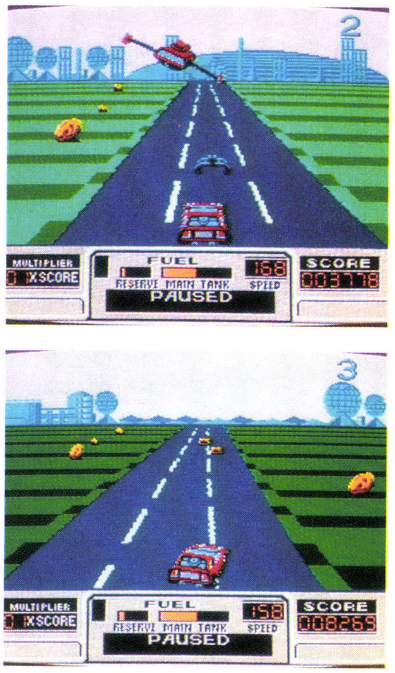
The action in this racetrack battle is fast and furious. As you eat up the track, several types of vehicles will join the fight for first place. Gold cars, which tend to stay in their own lanes, are particularly vulnerable to your gun fire. Motorcycles are also easy targets as they weave about the track. The blue cars, however, are virtually invincible and push competitors (that's you) off the road whenever they can. Other cars come up rapidly from behind, then slow and swoop down toward you. One thing is certain: *Roadblasters* will give your controller pad a workout.

The addition of arcade action to a fairly conventional race game sets *Roadblasters* apart from its competition. Even if you already have racing games in your collection, you might want to pick this one up.

That is, of course, unless you live in L.A., where the motorists do this sort of thing for real.

—Clayton Walnum

Mindscape Inc.
3444 Dundee Road
Northbrook, IL 60062
(312) 480-7667



If you reside in Los Angeles, the philosophy behind Mindscape's *Roadblasters* of a free-for-all on the streets won't be much of a fantasy.

Kings of the Beach

ULTRA
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	7
Graphics	8
Playability	9
Overall	8

Though it's been considered a professional sport for many years, beach volleyball still looks more like "fun" than "work." Real-life champs Randy Stoklos and Sinjin Smith surely agree, and that's why they've offered their input and likenesses to Ultra's *Kings of the Beach*. Based on the popular Electronic Arts computer game, *Kings* features the aforementioned pros in a variety of professional beach-volleyball contests. These include a single-game match, a tournament mode and special practice sessions that help you to refine your moves. There's also a "registration" booth that you can visit in order to adjust the game's default settings.

Join the ranks of the professional beach volleyball players in Ultra's *Kings of the Beach*.

The game play is authentic and accurate. Your on-screen surrogate is capable of a variety of moves, ranging from the rudimentary "bump" and "set" to the mighty "Kong block." Even the serve, the most basic function of a volleyball match, is handled with realistic detail: Players can launch the ball three different ways, from any position behind the line.

During solo play the computer controls your partner, and does a pretty good job

You've bridged mighty rivers and tunneled majestic mountains. Now you're at the throttle of an $850 million Railroad Empire.

With your next move, it could all go up in smoke.

Play the longshot.

Exercise shrewd business savvy as you maintain a delicate balance between revenue-building passenger lines and empire-building freight lines.

You're at the helm of your own powerful *Railroad Empire*, having magnified modest capital into a burgeoning enterprise.

Strategically manage your resources to maximize your expansion across rivers, through mountains and over gorges.

The ability to design and execute your master plan within a single year is your vital link to success. But remember, every action you take could make you or break you.

Discover the ultimate PC challenge of *Railroad Empire*.

The game includes maps and tools to build your own Transcontinental Railroad or Orient Express.

Railroad Empire.

All it takes is all you've got.

ARTDINK

Requires IBM PC or compatible with CGA or EGA, 384K RAM and DOS 2.11 or higher. Exclusively distributed by Seika Corporation, 20000 Mariner Avenue, Suite 100, Torrance, CA 90503. Phone: 1 (800) 462-5040. *©1989 ARTDINK. IBM is a registered trademark of International Business Machines Corporation.*

CIRCLE #117 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

too! If you're not too confident of your skills, just hang back and let the other guy make all the difficult blocks and saves. He'll miss a few, but such errors actually contribute to the illusion of cooperative play. It's like having an invisible friend who's always available! If two players participate, they can either team up as Smith and Stoklos or compete head-to-head with one computer-controlled partner on each team. Owners of the "NES Satellite" can enjoy three- or four-player competition; the more, the merrier.

Kings of the Beach contains some of the smoothest animation seen on the NES to date. The players leap, dive and run around the screen with their arms, legs and heads all moving with impressive realism. Scoring a point will usually bring the players together for a high five; missing the ball can cause a hilarious outburst of ill temper, during which the player stomps around, kicking the sand in disgust.

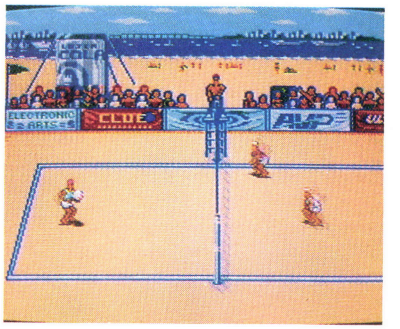
If you're unhappy with one of the referee's calls, you can press the SELECT button, which will send your player running up to the ref to demonstrate your anger and outright contempt. Although this alone may make you feel better, you'll rarely change his mind; he'll usually just shake his head and show you his penalty card to let you know that he doesn't appreciate your outburst. But sometimes, if it's a close one, the referee will reverse the call in your favor, to the accompaniment of the spectators' cheers.

Once you've mastered the intricacies of the game, it's time to move on to the tournament mode. In it you'll travel to places like San Diego, Chicago and the Hawaiian Islands, where you'll play groups of three matches at a time against increasingly difficult opponents. The first team you'll meet resembles a pair of lobotomy patients, but the competition soon heats up to a more challenging level. Experienced gamers may recognize a member of one of the Chicago teams: it's Bionic Lester from Ultra's *Skate or Die* title.

After each city you're given a password that can be used to continue the tournament later. One of the nice things about this feature is that the password is a word, not a jumble of characters and numbers that must be written down in order to remember it.

When you're scrambling to position yourself beneath the ball in order to return it or set up your partner, it's not always perfectly obvious where the ball is going to land. There are some helpful visual clues (such as the ball's shadow on the ground), but when the action gets more intense, it's pretty hard to judge your position in time. To compensate for this, your player will stop moving when he reaches the exact spot where the ball is headed. In other words, all that you really have to do is run around until your player freezes, and you'll be in the perfect position to hit the ball.

Okay, it may not sound like much, but I think it's pretty impressive. What this means to me is that the game itself is really trying to cooperate with you. Unlike the vast majority of video games, in which the computer conjures up an unlimited number of enemies to prevent you from reaching your goal, *Kings of the Beach* wants you to succeed. The game program actually encourages a good performance. By simplifying this one aspect of the contest, you're free to concentrate on other, more important things, like the score, the direction of the ball's return, your opponents' locations, and so on. I can think of several baseball video games that would have benefited from a similar feature to assist the player in fielding the ball.



***Kings of the Beach* offers some of the smoothest animation and excitement that we've ever seen in an NES cartridge.**

All things considered, this little cartridge provides a pleasant diversion from the never-ending stream of *Super Mario Bros.* clones. It can't be argued that beach volleyball involves as much strategy as baseball, nor is it as serious-minded as football. But *Kings* sure gets my vote as one of the best sports simulations available for the NES. Players who live in Mid-Western climates should especially appreciate the game's theme. (I'm writing this review in the midst of another sub-zero Chicago winter—man, that beach sure looks good to me!) I'll make this as simple as possible: *Kings of the Beach* takes a fun sport and makes it a fun video game. I believe it'd be pretty tough to find someone who would disagree with that assessment.

—Chris Bieniek

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CIRCLE #118 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

8 Eyes

TAXAN

For the Nintendo Entertainment System

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	5
Graphics	7
Playability	5
Overall	6

8 Eyes puts you in the role of Orin the Falconer, whose role it is to save the world by collecting the eight jewels of power, known as the "8 Eyes." Fortunately, this is only a game; otherwise, the world would be doomed for sure.

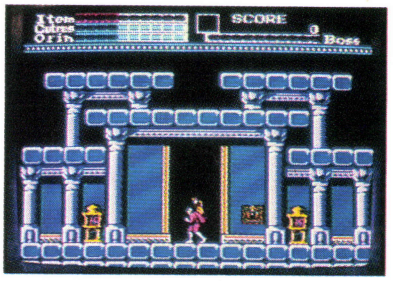
The opening screen shows seven kingdoms named for seven countries—Egypt, Germany, Spain, Africa(?), Arabia, Italy and India. These surround the eighth land known as the "House of Ruth." You may select any of the seven lands, though you will find out by trial and error that some are tougher than others. Further, you must deduce the right order to enter the lands, because at the end of each level is a "boss" who can only be defeated if you are holding the right sword—and that sword can be obtained on only one of the eight levels. After defeating the boss, one of the eight jewels and a password for that level appears. Although each level has unique features, they are basically similar.

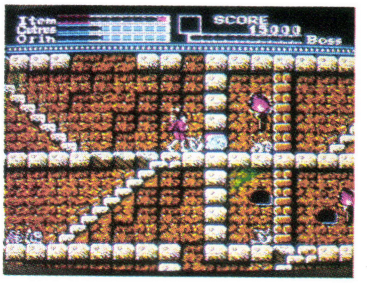
You maneuver Orin around with the control pad, moving left and right, thrusting with his sword, jumping and ducking as he is assaulted by various opponents. He can also climb up and down stairs, though getting the right action to get him to climb or descend staircases is much too difficult and a source of frustration.

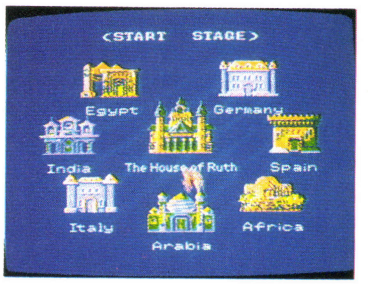
Orin is equipped with both standard and unusual weapons. He enters the game with only a weak sword, good against one of the bosses. This sword is effective against some enemies and not others; some enemies require multiple hits to kill. Along the way, however, he can defeat certain enemies and gain special weapons. By pausing the game you can select which of the special weapons available you want to use. A weapon is triggered by pressing the "A" button while holding the control pad in the "up" position. In order for the special weapon to work, however, you must have enough power for it, so you can't use a special weapon often. The special weapons are such things as boomerangs, power balls, guns and throwing daggers.

The most unusual weapon is also the most difficult to control. Orin comes with a falcon named Cutrus. Most of the time Cutrus is perched on Orin's shoulder, but pressing the control pad "up" while pressing the "B" button launches Cutrus into the air, where he will fly around until you repeat the action to recall him. While he is flying, you can command him to attack, whereupon he will dive on anything around. Some enemies cannot be killed by your sword, so you must learn how to control the falcon. Further, many enemies can be distracted by attacking them with Cutrus, while you move in to finish them off yourself.

Each level consists of ledges, stairs, various background effects (such as torches, windows, etc.) and two main kinds of enemies. The first is a flying enemy, and though these vary from level to level, their actions are pretty much the same: They flitter about and make a nuisance of themselves. The other enemies are more deadly—men and strange beasts who attack with not only swords and whips but projectile weapons like arrows and bullets as well. These creatures can emerge from doorways and may not be susceptible to damage from your sword.







As Orin the Falconer, you'll need to collect the eight jewels of power, which give Taxan's *8 Eyes* its name.

When you kill an enemy, their life force floats around for a while afterwards; if you can touch it, you can prolong your own life. The life force takes the form of a cross, and some crosses provide power for Orin, while others are for Cutrus. Your lifeline, Cutrus' lifeline and the amount of item power (for special weapons) are shown in lifelines at the top of the screen. Various doors provide access to levels, but you must find and activate the door switch. Once again, Cutrus can come in handy for switches too high to jump up to, but you can't go through a door unless Cutrus is on your shoulder. Each level also contains "power-up" items to restore life force and provide limited invincibility.

The graphics are sharp, clear and well animated, and the sound is effective, if uninspired. But, as hinted at in the opening paragraph, this game has a high frustration factor. Games tend to be short, not only because getting used to the various controls for your weapons and falcon is difficult, but you have only a single life—and it is over too quickly. As you exchange blows with the seemingly never-ending supply of enemies, your life force ebbs until the game is over. Even if you manage to survive a level, the chances are that you won't have figured out the right order to play the seven levels (hmm, seven factorial is, uh,

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5,040 combinations) so that you won't prevail against that boss.

Thus, *8 Eyes* is made artificially hard by such factors. I suspect that for most players, the game will soon end up collecting dust on your storage shelf.

—David Plotkin

Taxan
161 Nortech Parkway
San Jose, CA 95134
(408) 946-9500

Zoom

SEGA

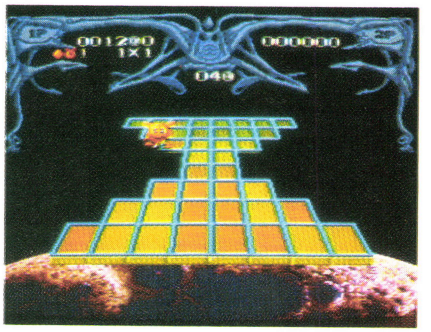
For the Sega Genesis ($44.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	2
Graphics	5
Playability	5
Overall	4

Zoom isn't a typical Genesis game: no punching or kicking and no ninjas or biomechanical monsters in sight. It's a relentlessly cute and fast-moving strategy game in which a bulbous, little, animated creature is zipped around on the lines of a grid. Picture a book of 36 crossword puzzles, each puzzle a different shape. Mr. Smart, as this character is called, frantically slides down the lines enclosing the squares, changing their color as he goes. When he has completely enclosed a square, the square begins to flash. Get the whole grid flashing and Mr. Smart gets a bonus—if he's finished before the timer runs out—and zips on to the next grid.

Meanwhile, there's a bunch of little nasties out to foil Mr. Smart's plan. The villains ("phantoms") come in all shapes, and they cruise around the grid too. When they catch Mr. Smart, he may lose a life...or he may slow down, becoming an easier target. Fortunately, there are powerful goodies constantly popping on and off throughout the game, and Mr. Smart can catch at least a few. When he catches the goodies, the phantoms temporarily freeze or slow down or vanish entirely, or some similar benefit.

Smart's abilities are incredible. He can move along any horizontal or vertical line. He can jump, sometimes even jumping right off the side of the puzzle, to hidden squares sitting invisibly outside the borders. Once found, these squares can be shortcuts past the phantoms or safety zones where no phantoms go. Once in a while a goody will appear that will send Smart immediately to the next grid. Although Smart dies a lot, there are also plenty of extra Smarts to collect through points or by making ten squares flash in sequence.



Sega's *Zoom*, for the Genesis, brings Discovery Software's computer game to video-game screens.

As his last defense, there are the rubber balls. Smart has a limited number of rubber balls that he can toss behind him as he goes. This bounces a pursuing phantom back a few squares, giving a temporary advantage. It's an unusual weapon and difficult to master.

Smart must move through six levels in all, each with six grids. The game can be continued at the beginning of the last level reached. Thus, Smart has to reach Grid 7 before the continue feature kicks in. Wipe out on Grid 12, and you'll have to continue back at seven. There are elements here of *Q*Bert*, *Pac-Man* and the real classic *Pepper II*, yet *Zoom* isn't the game any of these are. What it does have going for it are great graphics. For a game of this genre, the color and dimensions are excellent. There are myriad bits of exceedingly cute and impressive animation. The backgrounds and all the assorted pops and boings are delightful, thanks to some extremely smooth shading, shadowing and highlighting. The detail goes on and on, making this game very exciting...visually.

But that's where the magic ends. There are no new wrinkles here, only old, familiar ones. The result is a game that's way too tired and has nothing new or fresh to offer. The grids are not much different from each other. Mr. Smart is extremely frustrating to maneuver, as he refuses to stop right on intersections. Instead, he has to sweep through them, changing directions on the fly, which makes for muddy and imprecise control. Because there's a counter ticking down the seconds, there's no time to be cunning and methodical, either. Smart must keep moving at all times, or he'll never beat the clock. Once the timer runs out, the game doesn't end, but any chance for a bonus vanishes and the phantoms quickly multiply and conquer.

The sounds are annoying. An androgynous voice constantly exhorts Mr. Smart to, "C'mon, boy!" Sometimes this will happen dozens of times on a level. While the musical themes are jolly and inoffensive, this repetitive voice will drive everybody in earshot absolutely bonkers within five minutes.

Though I applaud Sega's efforts to branch out with their games, *Zoom* is possibly the most disappointing Genesis game out of the 16 or so I've played. Almost every game appeals to some audience, somewhere, but I believe *Zoom* will garner a pretty elite bunch of fans: those who love maddeningly repetitive geomet-

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meldac

CIRCLE #120 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

ric puzzles combined with terminally cute graphics.

—Joshua Mandel

Sega of America
573 Forbes Boulevard
South San Francisco, CA 94080
(800) USA-SEGA

SpellCaster

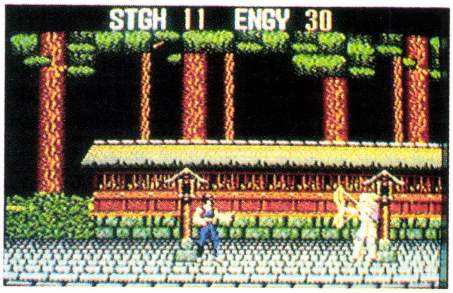
SEGA

For the Sega Master System ($59.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	5
Graphics	6
Playability	6
Overall	6

SpellCaster is an interesting combination of graphic text adventure and straight arcade action. While in some scenes you'll use your controller-pad skills to fight creatures in horizontally scrolling displays, in others you'll have to cool the battle lust and use your head in order to solve the puzzles that'll give you access to the next levels of the game.

SpellCaster, for the Sega Master System, mixes graphic adventure and arcade elements for an interesting combination of game play.



In the adventure mode, the animated displays are replaced by a static graphic depicting your current location and by a menu of commands. The commands available are move, talk, look, take, use and spell. Using a pointing-finger cursor, the look command allows you to examine objects shown in the graphic. You move the cursor with the control pad, positioning the finger over the object you wish to examine. When you press Button No. 2, text describing the object appears in the "talk" window.

The move command allows you to travel between scenes. When it's chosen, a menu of accessible areas comes up on the screen. Because you can travel only to areas on which you have information, it's important that you frequently use the talk command to question other characters in the game. The take command allows you to pick up the special items you'll be offered as you play. The use command lets you use those items. The spell command provides you with a menu of possible spells from which to choose.

When in an action scene, you must make your way past a variety of obstacles, including bridges from which you can fall and pits over which you must jump. Of course, no arcade scene would be complete without a variety of creatures to battle, all of which would like nothing better than to chew you into wizard meat. Two attributes, strength and energy, determine how much damage your on-screen character can sustain and how many spells he may use, respectively.

You start the game with 20 strength points, the amount increasing as you gain experience. When you're wounded, your strength decreases, until at zero, you die. Casting spells uses energy, with different spells requiring different amounts of energy. Both strength and energy can be restored by picking up the blue and orange balls that are sometimes left behind by defeated enemies.

As you play, you'll be awarded weapons that will increase your attacking power. Although there are several different weapons—dokko, vajira, trident and war hammer—none of them actually provide you with a new form of attack. They merely make you stronger. Although you're stuck with only one type of weapon, you do have a variety of spells at your command. The fudo spell, for example, calls up a ball of fire, while the makiri spell allows you to fly. Other spells include kannon, which banishes the walking dead; hatten, which forms a tornado; nobotam, which cloaks you in invincibility; and indra, which summons a lightning storm.

SpellCaster allows an unlimited number of continues. In addition, a password reentry system lets you to begin a game where you last left off. These features are important in adventure games like this one, which are frequently long and complicated.

All in all, *Spellcaster* is an okay game, though nothing special. The graphics are unimpressive, with many areas looking virtually identical except for the enemies that populate them. The sound effects are minimal, and the music is unremarkable. Still, it's an interesting combination of action and adventure. It's always nice to see something a little different.

—Clayton Walnum

Sega of America
573 Forbes Blvd.
South San Francisco, CA 94080
(415) 742-9300

Bonk's Adventure

NEC

For the TurboGrafx-16 ($54.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	9
Graphics	9
Playability	9
Overall	9

Yet another princess has been kidnapped. This time it's in the year 10,000 B.C., and Bonk the caveman has volunteered for the rescue mission. Unfortunately for Bonk, weapons haven't been invented yet. Still, they don't call our hero

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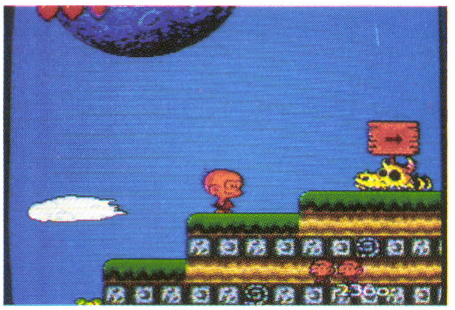
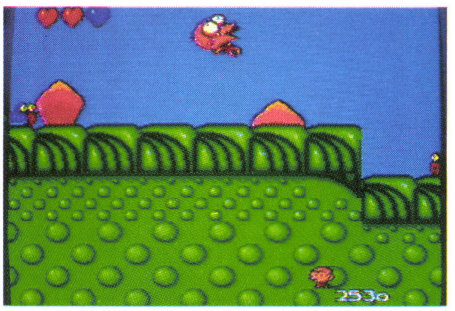
CIRCLE #121 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

"Bonk" for nothing. His head is as hard as a 1,000-year-old grapefruit. With it he can head-butt creatures into oblivion.

It isn't too often that a game comes along that's as immediately engaging as *Bonk's Adventure*. Within five minutes of play, I knew that this was going to be the family's new favorite—and I was right. *Bonk's Adventure* has been gracing our TV screen for two days running now and shows no sign of giving up that prestigious position.





Bonk's Adventure combines great game play with sensational animation to yield a contest that's irresistible. Bonk's various expressions as he head-butts his way through one world after another are hilarious (although his foaming at the mouth when he dies is a bit gross). The creatures against which he must battle are equally as well animated, making this one of the most visually entertaining games this reviewer has seen.

As mentioned previously, Bonk's head is his only weapon. However, he may use it in various ways. When walking on the ground, he may simply lean over quickly and bop whatever enemy blocks his path. Some enemies give up after one hit; others require several butts before they expire. Bonk may also jump upward and head-butt enemies above him. In addition, once in the air, he may go into a rapid spin that gives him a rapid-fire head-butt ability.

As he travels toward the princess, Bonk will find fruit and vegetables that, when eaten, will partially restore his life energy. He'll also occasionally find meat, which makes him increasingly stronger until at last he becomes invincible for a short time. The animation you'll see whenever Bonk eats meat is one of the best in the game, with Bonk leaping into the air, a mushroom cloud bursting from the top of his head and steam pouring from his face as the meat (must be spicy stuff) does its trick. Each time he eats a piece of meat, he gains a more frazzled and annoyed expression.

Another amusing animation occurs when Bonk climbs a high cliff. He grabs the ledge with his teeth and virtually gnaws his way upward. I'd hate to see his dentist bills.

Along the way, Bonk will discover many different flowers. When jumped on, some provide the aforementioned fruit and vegetables. Others give Bonk a boost upward, much like a trampoline. Still others contain nasty surprises. The flowers are this primitive world's version of a treasure chest. You never know exactly what they contain, although their colors provide a hint.

NEC's *Bonk's Adventure* is chock-full of colorful graphics, elaborate animations and the most hilarious caveman ever to star in a video game.

Bonk's Adventure contains five levels of play, with each level divided into several sub-levels, much like *Super Mario Bros.* At the end of each level, Bonk must defeat a boss creature in order to advance to the next location. The last boss creature is, of course, King Drool, the creature who kidnapped the princess.

Finally, the graphics, as with all TurboGrafx-16 games, are arcade quality. The music is wonderful, which seems to be a TurboGrafx trademark. In fact, the music is so good, you may find yourself turning on your TurboGrafx instead of your stereo.

Bonk's Adventure is a terrific game, the best I've seen on the TurboGrafx-16 yet. And that's saying something.

—Clayton Walnum

NEC Technologies, Inc.
1255 Michael Drive
Wood Dale, IL 60191-1094
(312) 860-9500

Rock 'n' Ball

NTVIC

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($44.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	8

Rock 'n' Ball is a set of four games, including straight pinball. The other three games are variations on the pinball theme. It's extremely challenging, though hampered by poor instructions and a strange control scheme.

All of the games have some similarities. You can play against other players or against the computer, which offers six different opponents, ranging in skill from beginner to expert, each with strengths and weaknesses. You manipulate the flippers with the control pad, and bump the table right or left for control. There doesn't seem to be a "tilt" mechanism.

The first game is pinball, which can include one to four players. You are presented with a pretty standard pinball table, including bumpers, drop targets and gates. There are two sets of flippers to keep the ball in play and many bonus targets. To the upper right of the playing field is the "*Rock 'n' Ball* Item board." Just below it is a set of three drop targets. If

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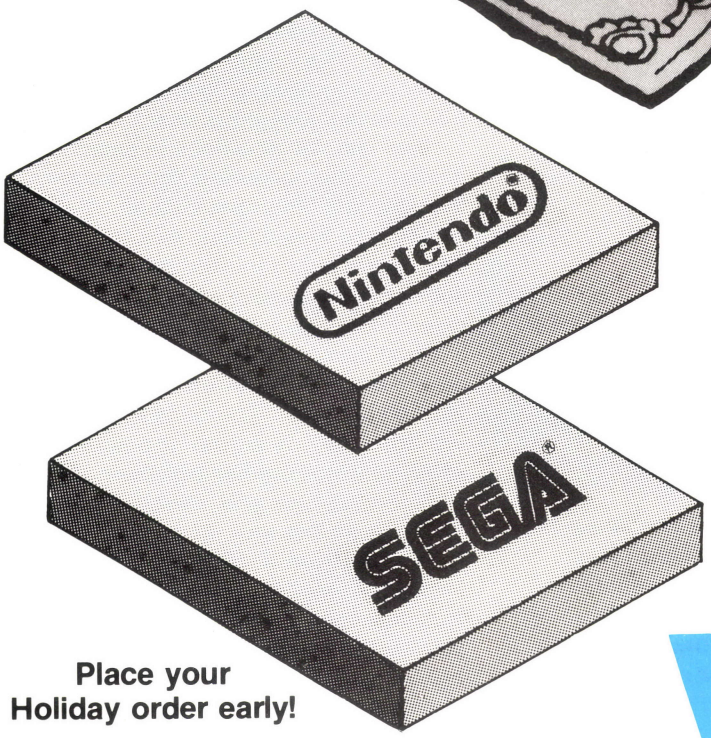

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you hit one of the drop targets, the item board spins, displaying various items. If you manage to hit all three drop targets, you can get special bonuses, not all of which are advantageous. For example, the hamburger causes a "stopper" to arise on the board, blocking one of the many exits and causing the ball to leave the board. The leather jacket causes a special flag to appear, which is worth 1,000 points if you hit it with the ball. On the negative side, the glass causes all bonus objects to disappear from the board. There is even a special stage that can be reached if the "key" item is showing on the item board when you hit it, which brings a ladder onto the board. If you can manage to get the ball to go up the ladder, then you move to the special level.

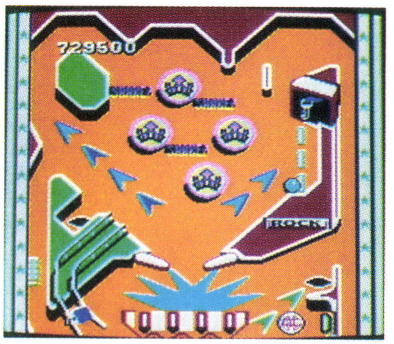
The special level is like no other pinball game I've ever seen. You must guide the ball and strike members of a gang who move across the screen. Hitting each of the four gang members twice obliterates them, but if you don't hit one before it moves off the board, then the full gang comes back again. Defeating all four gangs causes the big, pink Cadillac at the top of the screen to open its hood. Hitting balls into the hood provides lots of extra points. However, allowing the ball to drain down between the flippers brings you back to the regular pinball game.

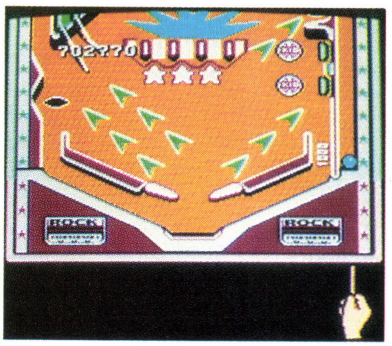
The second game available is called nine-ball. This pinball game consists of a board with many holes in it. The object is to get the balls into the holes to form a pattern. The patterns are simple—three balls across or down, five balls diagonally, one ball in each corner, etc. Unfortunately, there are obstacles, in the form of "nails" driven into the board, which deflect the ball. Here you must have mastered the art of bumping the table.

To make the game even more interesting, you start with 1,000 chips and can bet as many as you want on the outcome of the round. Different patterns are worth more—five balls diagonally is worth twice as much as three balls across. Also, patterns are additive—if you get two three-ball-across patterns and a diagonal pattern, you get four times the amount of the bet. There are multipliers that appear randomly on the board and bonuses available for large bets. These bonuses reward you with such benefits as more powerful flippers and free balls. One drawback to this game is that your winnings are added to your credit one at a time, so it can take an annoying amount of time for a large bet.

The third game is actually a set of three games that must be played against an opponent (which can be your NES, selecting one of the opponents mentioned previously). For all three games, the board is split in two. You control one set of flippers at the top or bottom of the board (switching sides after every point); your opponent controls the other set. The flippers can either be placed directly in front of your goal or near your opponent's goal, depending on where the ball is on the board. The idea is to knock the ball into your opponent's goal—the space between the opposing flippers. You can choose sets of three, five or seven games.

The three games—Bomber, Thunder, and Attack—are quite different because they have different obstacles. Thunder has special ramps that raise blockers which make it harder to lose the ball, while Bomber has special button targets that change the nature of the game—opening holes in the board. Finally, Attack has special buttons that activate features on the board. The most important of these is the "attack" button, which places a moving target in front of your opponent's goal, making it harder to hit the ball away from the goal. The "help" button also raises a stop in your goal, so it's virtually impossible to sink a straight-in shot.





NTVIC has entered the video-pinball market in style with their four-in-one game for the NES, *Rock 'n' Ball.*

The last set of games is called "sports pinball." You can select from soccer or ice hockey, but they are virtually the same. Again, you play against an opponent, with the object being to sink the ball (or puck) into your opponent's goal. Here though, you control a goalie who moves back and forth in front of the goal, as well as a "flipper" that's positioned in front of your opponent's goal. The flipper can be rotated right, left or across the screen in an effort to knock the ball into the goal.

The graphics and sound for *Rock 'n' Ball* are sharp and clear, with a catchy tune. I do have a gripe with the controls, though. Except for sports pinball, the "A" button controls the right flipper, but to control the left flipper, you must press the control pad left. Pressing the control pad right bumps the table right, while pressing the "B" button bumps the table left. This strange control scheme is difficult to get used to. In sports pinball, the "A" and "B" buttons rotate the flipper in opposite directions, but the flipper won't move across the board while it's rotating. You must position the flipper before attempting to hit the ball—awkward at best and difficult to do in the heat of a contest. The other problem is the instructions, which

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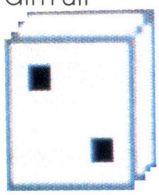
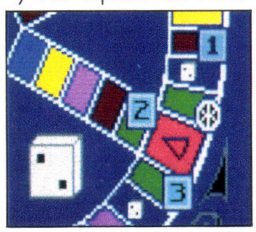
You can play the computer. Six different characters with artificial intelligence let you challenge the computer on different skill levels and in different subjects. Holly Wood is tough to beat in Entertainment. What Deke Athlon doesn't know about Sports isn't worth knowing. And Arndt Sharp is pretty dim all around.



You roll the die. The computer instantly indicates your options. You decide which location best fits your strategy.



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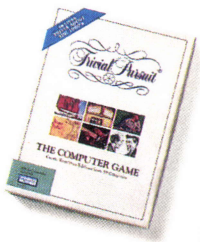

Trivial Pursuit®

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CIRCLE #123 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

are not very informative at all.

These two problems aside, however, this cartridge is an excellent value and fun to play, with lots of variety. If you like pinball, you'll really like *Rock 'n' Ball*, not only because it lets you play pinball without wasting quarters, but it has some features you could never find on a pinball machine in the "real" world.

—David Plotkin

NTVIC
50 Rockefeller Plaza, Suite 940
New York, NY 10020
(212) 489-8390

720°

MINDSCAPE

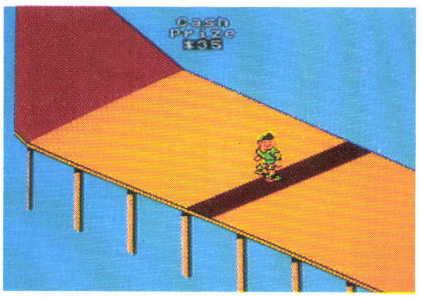
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

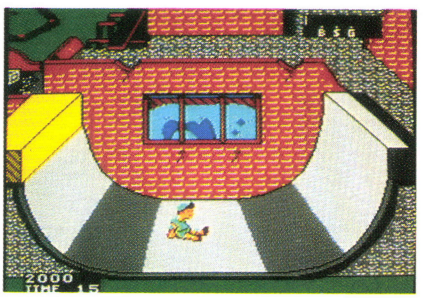
RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	4
Graphics	5
Playability	6
Overall	6

When I was younger, I yearned to try skateboarding. But the threat of skinned knees—or worse—kept my feet off that particular mode of transportation. Now, with *720°* from Mindscape, I can not only zip around on my skateboard, but I can try some of those rad maneuvers I'd never even think about in real life.

You don't have to worry about getting skinned elbows or breaking bones when you power up the NES version of *720°* by Mindscape.

In *720°*, you guide a small boy (complete with baseball cap) around on a skateboard. He travels in the direction you move the stick, and various combinations of the stick and buttons cause him to do tricks. He travels around a skateboard park, which is complete with stores for purchasing better equipment, events where he can win prizes, points and cash, and obstacles that could cost him dearly.





The skateboard park itself has sidewalks (look out for muggers and wrestlers, stretches of water and streets with cars that are going way too fast). Running into obstacles costs time, of which there is a rather short supply. If you run out of time, you get chased by a swarm of bees, which loses one of your three lives. There are convenient ramps that will let you leap through the air, over water and other obstacles for extra points. Pressing the "A" button causes you to leap into the air; if you happen to be traveling fast up a ramp when you attempt this maneuver, you can clear a considerable distance. While you are in the air, you can move the control pad in a different direction from the way you are going, which causes the boy to spin in the air. Just make sure you have the control pad pressed in the direction of travel when he lands back on the board, or he gets dumped.

There are stores throughout the park where you can purchase extra equipment—shoes, helmet, pads or a better skateboard. Better equipment not only lets you attempt more dangerous tricks, but it also impacts how much time you lose when you get dumped. You start out the game with $100, but can earn more by winning events and scooping up dollar bills left lying around in the park. Each piece of equipment can be upgraded four times, once for each level of the park.

Each of the four levels of the park has four events that you must compete in to move to the next level. You enter each level with three tickets, but must earn the fourth one by doing well in the first three competitions. The four events are the downhill, slalom, jump and ramp. The downhill is a track filled with hairpin curves, which is built over water, and you must stay on the track or get dunked. The slalom is much like a ski slalom—there are pairs of flags on a course built over water (of course), which you must go between for points. The jump is a series of ramps with water hazards at the end, where you must have enough speed and the correct timing to jump to the next ramp.

The final event is the ramp. This one will tax your control-pad skill. The ramp is a U-shaped half pipe, and you skate up one side and down to the bottom, then up the other side. That part is automatic. While you are on the ramp, however, you can attempt jumps, spins, handstands, slides and skating handstands. Each of these tricks is difficult, requiring considerable dexterity with the control pad and buttons—or, again, you'll get dumped.

In general, the graphics and animation in *720°* are only fair. The shapes are blocky and the colors not especially well chosen. The muggers move jerkily, although the small boy on the skateboard is well-done. For instance, the effect when he falls in the water is amusing. Finally, the sound is barely adequate.

If you've every hungered to try a skateboard, but never had the courage, *720°* should prove a lot of fun, especially if you've marveled at the tricks that you've seen people do on them. And even if you have no interest in skateboards, this contest is a lot of fun.

—David Plotkin

Mindscape
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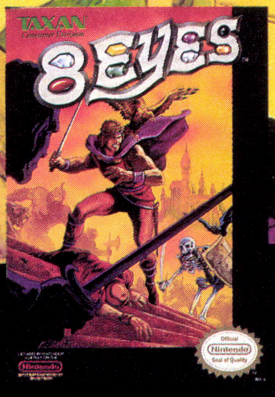

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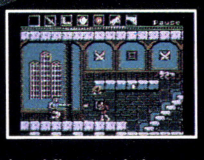

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CIRCLE #124 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Yea & Nay *is an inside look at the high and low points in the electronic-game industry. It's an opportunity for the companies that decide what games we'll be playing to be patted on the back or slammed to the mat for what they do.*

If you want to give credit where credit is due—whether the company belongs in the Hall of Fame or the Hall of Shame—send your opinions to VG&CE, *9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, Attn:* Yea & Nay. *Let's hear how you feel!*

YEA

We were a little worried there for a while, but it's reassuring to see that Sega and NEC are both actively pursuing licensees to produce software for their respective video-game systems.

For example, Sega seems to be signing a lot of computer-game manufacturers—such as Spectrum Holobyte, Electronic Arts and Activision, among others—to join it in creating a strong Genesis library. Popular computer titles like *688 Attack Sub* and *Ghostbusters II* will really catch the consumers' attention.

We can't count out NEC and its TurboGrafx-16 plans, however. NEC's booth at CES offered all the titles that it has brought out so far as well as games that will be appearing in America soon. (Many industry people are specifically counting on Cinemaware's contributions to weigh heavily in the success of the TurboGrafx-16 in the next year or so.) Additionally, NEC demonstrated some games that are in the works for the PC Engine in Japan—games that may make their way here shortly after their release overseas.

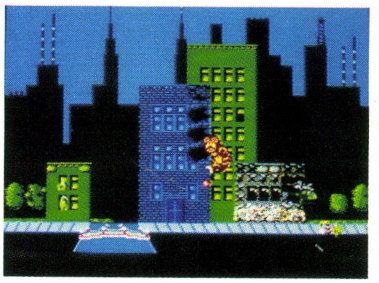
With this kind of support, there's no doubt that the next-generation game consoles are hitting the ground running with regard to building a library of software.

NAY

This nay isn't anything new, really, but that doesn't mean that we don't still get hot and bothered by it—nor has it passed the eyes of our readers. We've recently received a wealth of letters from game players who are disturbed with the restrictions that have evolved from exclusive licensing agreements.

In the past you could get almost any game that you wanted to play for whatever system you owned: whether it was an Atari 2600, Mattel Intellivision or another brand. Nowadays most licensing contracts stipulate a certain period of exclusivity. So a game released for the NES wouldn't be simultaneously sold for other consoles (though some exceptions, such as Double Dragon and Rampage, exist).

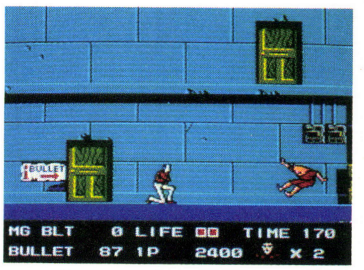
Hopefully, Congress' investigation into this situation will bring about a change so that all players can enjoy any game they are interested in. This practice has been in force for a while, but it needs to be changed, and changed soon!



NAY

In a similar vein, VG&CE was extremely disappointed with most of the software shown in Nintendo's CES booth. While it's impressive to see hundreds of titles shown within the 35,000 square foot "village," our weary eyes saw few games that hadn't been shown at previous shows. Also, not much of the NES software covered any new ground. Most of the cartridges were rehashes of the tiring run-and-shoot school of game design.

Call us spoiled for embracing the new game systems and leaning away from the NES community—as large and hard to ignore as it is—but it's the responsibility of game designers to keep things somewhat fresh.



YEA

It all started with Tengen risking everything by cutting loose from the Nintendo licensing system, followed by Color Dreams announcing its efforts to produce NES software independently. Now it seems that these events have sparked a wave of companies producing NES products outside of the strict Nintendo third-party licensing fold.

Sharedata, a company that is known for its computer software, demonstrated an NES version of the *Chiller* arcade shooting game. Thankfully, this cartridge will be brought out with a $19.95 price tag, well below the normal pricing of NES-compatible cartridges. Other similarly priced games will follow.

Perhaps the most ambitious company is Camerica, which is spreading its wings with some innovative products that evolved from a partnership with a British-based company called Codemasters. Though more details will follow, this pairing is working on bringing out an NES-compatible CD unit, hardware that will allow multiple NES systems to be networked together and an adapter that will intercept the program from any NES cartridge. This last accomplishment would allow for changing of certain game play criteria, like how many lives you start with, how high your player could jump and the characteristics of your enemies in a game.

VG&CE has always supported the underdog, and we wish these companies luck in getting their products to the consumer, who will undoubtedly benefit from low-cost, quality software and ingenious enhancements.

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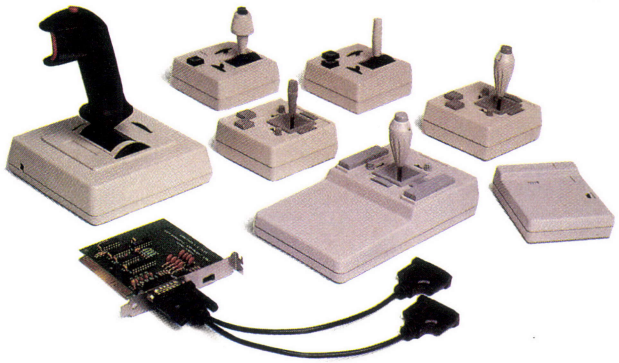

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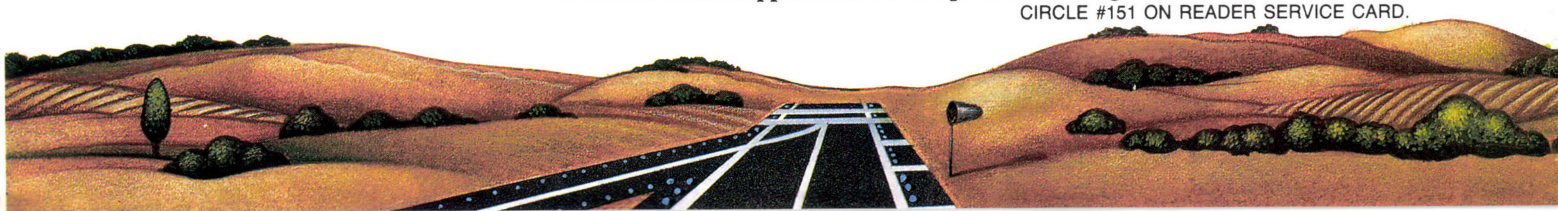


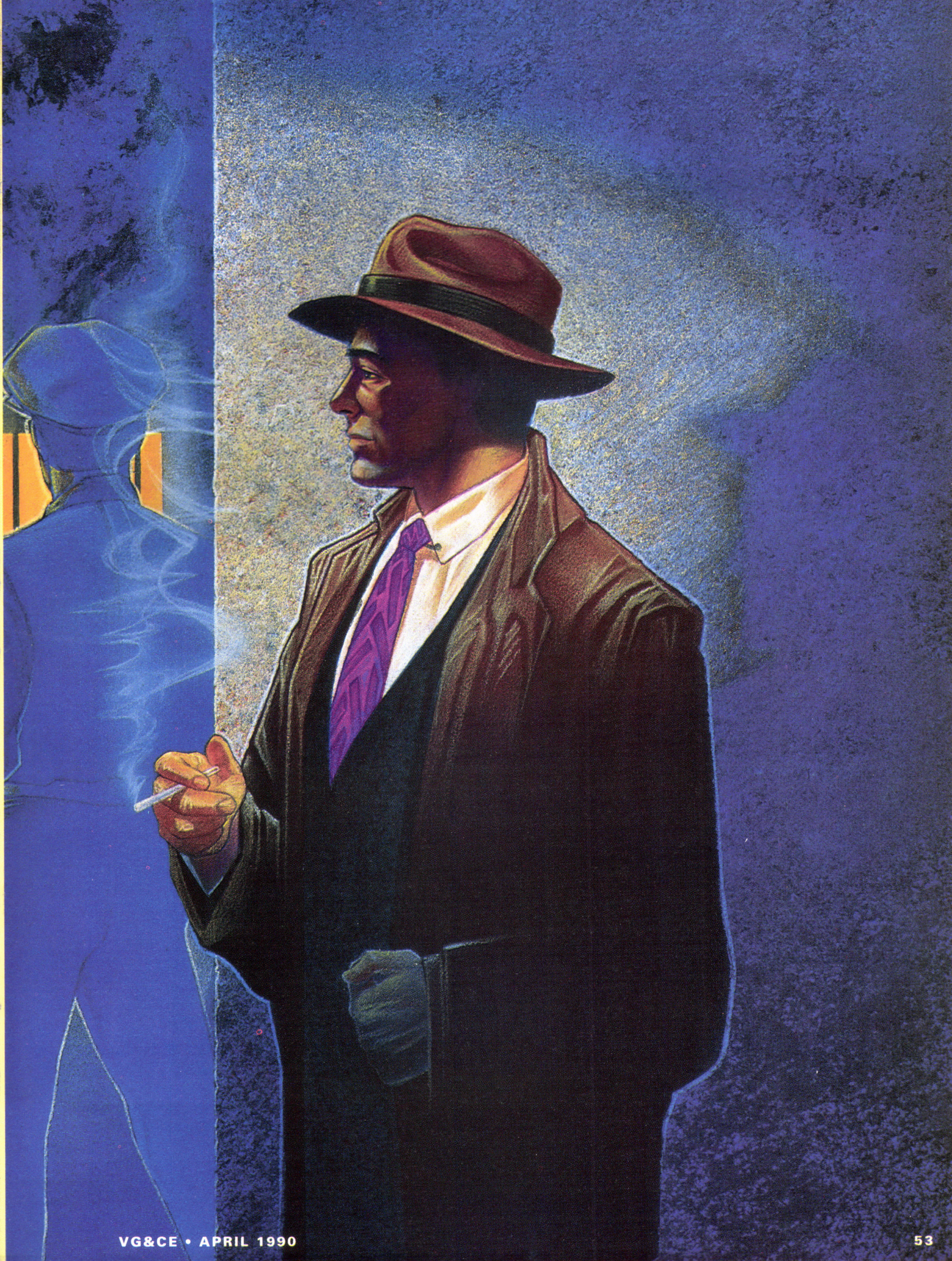
WHODUNIT?

Computer Mystery and Suspense Games for Armchair Detectives.

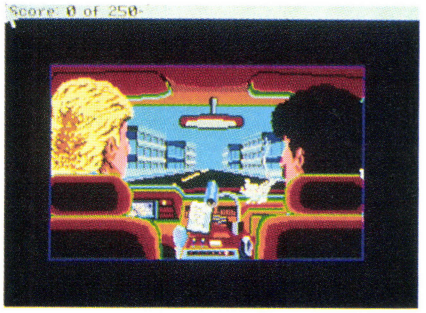
BY ARNIE KATZ

One of the most popular radio series of the 1940s was *I Love a Mystery*. That show is long gone, of course, but the sentiment behind it definitely lingers. Mystery and suspense dominate almost every form of mass entertainment, from comic books to contemporary fiction.

Illustration by Alan Hunter



For a long while it didn't look like crime and detection would ever achieve comparable success in the computer- and video-game field. Science fiction and fantasy were the most frequent topics for electronic games in the early days, and mysteries are only just now starting to catch up to the "big two." The world's first computer game, *Space War*, developed at M.I.T. in the mid-1960s, paved the way for over a thousand futuristic titles.



Sierra On-Line's *Police Quest II* is one of the best mystery games.

Computing attracts those who are intrigued by the new and the unknown. In turn, this creates a natural connection between computer gamers and sci-fi.

Science fiction speculates about the possible, and fantasy does the same about the *im*possible. Small wonder fans of one usually like the other. Fantasy emerged as the second most popular subject in the early 1980s, and it has never lost that position.

Just like the fable about the tortoise and the hare, electronic mystery games started late, gained popularity slowly and have only blossomed in the last four years. Publishers trying to tempt a public jaded by a surplus of science-fiction and fantasy games are betting their chips on detective thrillers of every conceivable type.

Blame the inherent complexity of most mysteries for their failure to stake a claim in the software market until recently. It was easier for designers and programmers to portray warring starships and battling monsters than the interplay of characters found in suspense stories. A second obstacle was the inability of early machines to produce the dynamic sound and graphics that do so much to set the mood for a mystery.

Now, to paraphrase Arthur Conan Doyle, "the games are afoot!"

HARD-BOILED DETECTIVES

Mysteries come in many forms. The cerebral "drawing room" whodunit reigns supreme in England, but hard-boiled detective stories have been number one in this country since the heyday of *Black Mask* magazine, through film noir classics like *Double Indemnity* and right up to today's *Spenser* novels by Robert B. Parker and the *Wiseguy* television series.

Smashing out of the gaming screen like a fist to the chops are *Police Quest* and *Police Quest II* (Sierra for IBM PC, Amiga, Apple IIGS and Macintosh). Retired law-enforcement officer Jim Wells draws on his undercover and street cop experiences in this pair of interactive graphic adventures. His taut prose and gritty situations combine the elements of police procedure with no-holds-barred action. There are many good mystery games, but these are the best of their type.

Casting a sinister shadow over both titles is the Death Angel. In the first title in the series, the player must stop this unscrupulous crime lord from bringing drugs into a small Midwestern city.

Cinemaware takes you to Chicago's 1931 gang wars in *King of Chicago*.

The Death Angel murders the jailer, escapes and kidnaps the hero's girlfriend for good measure in *Police Quest II*. This time, the cases take the detective through a scuba diving sequence and a nail-biting encounter with skyjacking terrorists.

"Sam, they want you dead," says the voice on the telephone who starts the wheels-within-wheels plot of *Borrowed Time* (Virgin Mastertronic for all systems). Sam Harlow is the hero of this Chandler-esque blend of mystery, mayhem and murder. *Borrowed Time* was originally published by Activision in 1985, but quick-play features and animated touches in the artwork give it a more contemporary look.

King of Chicago (Cinemaware for IBM PC, Amiga and Macintosh) isn't an orthodox mystery, but this crime caper set in 1931 Chicago is likely to appeal to the same computerists who enjoy "hard-boiled" detective games. As the ambitious gunsel Pinky, the player steers a bullet path to the top of the mob in an action adventure that alternates "talking heads" conversation with various real-time games to chronicle Pinky's rise to power.

MINDS AGAINST CRIME

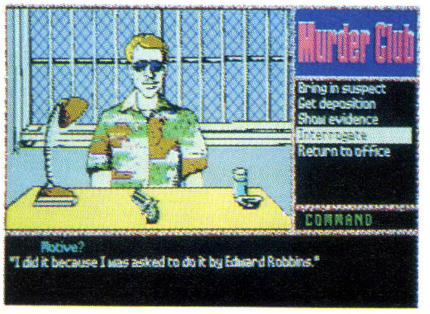
Hard-boiled detectives usually think with their fists and a blue-steel roscoe, but many other mystery solvers use their heads for something more subtle than a battering ram. In games of this type, the computerist carefully accumulates evidence, analyzes physical facts and employs cold logic to bring the wicked to judgment.

A story coauthored by the prestigious London Detective Club, whose members included both Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, provides the story line for *Scoop* (Spinnaker for IBM PC and Apple). Someone is killing the cream of Fleet Street, and the player must track the killer through London before more reporters face that ultimate deadline.

A menu-driven system moves the reporter-turned-detective from place to place to hunt for clues and question witnesses and suspects. The program keeps strict account of time, including the daily eight-hour sleep period. Frivolous side trips and haphazard investigating should be avoided to insure that the reporter gets the scoop on the multiple killings before his or her rivals.

One to four amateur law enforcers join Queensport's 13th precinct in *Police Blotter* (Avalon Hill for Apple II). Players vie with each other and the "case clock" to solve seven different crimes plaguing the mythical city.

Each mini-game has three skill levels, geared to challenge first-timers and veterans alike. Police officers fan out through the city to look for evidence and interview witnesses. An extensive menu makes questioning suspects a snap, and well-drawn head-and-shoulders vignettes of each person add eye appeal.



You'll have 33 different suspects in Kyodai's *Murder Club*.

The state of affairs toss a baffling case in the lap of Detective J.B. Harold in *Murder Club* (Kyodai for IBM PC). The

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somewhat unpopular Bill Robbins has met a violent death. It is up to the gamer, as J.B., to construct a case to catch the late businessman's killer.

Besides the usual hunt for clues and interrogation of the game's 33 characters, Detective Harold can consult the crime lab, library and the prosecutor's files for useful information about the case.

Riverhill Soft's *Murder Club* also has outstanding artwork for a game of this type. The accent is still on logic, but detailed drawings of the town's 20 locations and important citizens give *Murder Club* a solid feel that is sometimes missing in text-heavy mystery programs.

The world's most famous mystery board game goes electronic in *Clue: Master Detective* (Virgin Mastertronic for IBM PC, Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST and Commodore 64). The latest addition to Mastertronic's computer board game line is as faithful to the original as the same publisher's *Risk* and *Monopoly*, and that's great news for everyone who has ever spotted Colonel Mustard with the candlestick in the conservatory.

The one-woman crime wave, *Carmen Sandiego*, shows no signs of slowing down. Younger players will especially enjoy these programs, which mix strong game play and graphics with geography lessons.

The queen of crime and her gang have cavorted in four mysteries so far: *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?*, *Where in the U.S. Is Carmen Sandiego?*, *Where in Europe Is Carmen Sandiego?* and *Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* (Brøderbund for all computer systems). The student learns facts about famous places while gathering information about gang members. By logically arranging this data, the sleuth compiles dossiers on the culprits that lead to their capture.

The *Carmen Sandiego* mysteries are nearly perfect as educational games. Each imparts a lot of information within a game structure as enjoyable as any pure-entertainment program.

CELEBRITY CRIMESTOPPERS

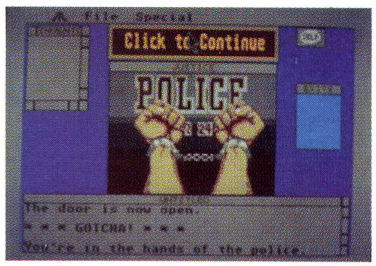
Licenses are plentiful in all categories of video and computer games, and mysteries are no exception. Many famous detectives are now featured in their own computer games.

Ian Fleming's James Bond, previously featured in a Virgin Mastertronic title of the same name two years ago, returns to the home screen in *Licence to Kill* (Brøderbund for IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST and Commodore 64). Domark's multistage contest skimps a bit on plot and characterization, but it has all the action from the latest Bond epic.

The player, as the suave British operative, pilots a helicopter, swims through shark-infested seas, water skis armed with a harpoon gun and chases oil tankers in a rickety crop duster. And it wouldn't be a James Bond thriller without plenty of shooting. Helping 007 capture the drug kingpin is frantic fun for arcade aces.

Detroit's Axel Foley is about as far as you can get from the debonair Bond, but he's also starring in an action-strategy computer game. *Beverly Hills Cop* (Box Office for IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST and Commodore 64) has the flavor of the two movies but is actually a previously unrecorded escapade that takes place between them.

Subway Software spins its original story about a robbery ring as a series of action games connected by noninteractive bridge sequences. These interludes advance the plot and show the characters talking to each other, though the language is a lot tamer than Murphy's usual rap.



Mindscape's *Deja Vu* is one of the mystery software classics.

Cleanstreets Harry, the top cop in *Operation: Cleanstreets* (Brøderbund for Amiga and Commodore 64) takes a two-fisted approach to fighting crime. His is a one-man war against a gang that has infested one of the city's seedier neighborhood.

There's little detection but plenty of life-and-death fights against lawbreakers in this side-perspective solitaire contest. Hand-to-hand combat is against felons armed with knives, chain saws and baseball

Play It Again, Sam

VG&CE LOOKS AT SOME OLD FAVORITES

Let's not overlook all the excellent games of the last few years in the excitement over all the new and forthcoming detective games. They don't have leading-edge technology, but all offer plenty of enjoyable play for armchair criminologists.

Deadline, Suspicion *and* Witness *(Infocom for all systems) are three of the best text adventures ever published by the company that perfected this type of game with its* Zork *trilogy. Those who demand sound and graphics should skip these titles, but each provides an escalating change for amateur investigators.*

The three adventures aren't a series in the ordinary sense, but they are linked by overall approach and a similarity of prose style. Each puts the detective in a tight situation in which he or she must race against time and the police to find the true villain of the piece.

Don't forget another trio of games, which features sleuths who are looking for lost memories as well as criminals: Deja Vu *(Mindscape for IBM PC, Amiga and Macintosh),* Amnesia *(Electronic Arts for all systems) and* Mindshadow *(Mediagenic for all systems).*

Amnesia *drew little attention when first released, primarily because it's a pure text adventure, and this format had clearly lost its audience by the time EA published this mammoth electronic novel written by the controversial science-fiction writer Thomas N. Disch.*

Mindshadow, *by Brian Fargo and Interplay, and* Deja Vu, *from Icom Simulations, are in more modern formats. The former is an illustrated adventure, while the latter introduced point-and-click, Macintosh-style control. Both are globetrotting quests for the hero's own past, spiced by the need to unravel a mystery before the bad guys or the police make recovering the past irrelevant.*

Murder on the Zinderneuf *(Electronic Arts for Apple II, Atari 800 and Commodore 64) and* Killed Until Dead *(Accolade for Commodore 64) each feature several thinly disguised knockoffs of famous fictional detectives.*

In Murder on the Zinderneuf, *the player becomes any of several sleuths and must use that character's methods to catch a killer before the zeppelin docks in New York. The investigator moves from room to room via an overhead map of the airship to hunt for clues and interrogate a colorful cast of witnesses.*

The pseudo-celebrities are the suspects in Killed Until Dead. *All belong to the Murder Club, in which members concoct perfect crimes—and then try them out against each other! Hercule Holmes must figure out the victim, the murder, the weapon and the scene of the potential murder before midnight to foil the deed in this point-and-click murder caper.*

bats. When Harry defeats a thug, he frisks for the contraband. Only when he has rounded up all the illegal goods and dumped them into a fire barrel can Harry go on to the next street that needs a police cleanup.

INTERNATIONAL INTRIGUE

David Wolf: Secret Agent (Dynamix for IBM PC) blends intrigue with five elaborate action simulations linked by cinematic story sequences. The 21-member development team used digitized images of real actors and specially constructed movie sets to make this four-disk *tour de force*.

American agent David Wolf, a sort of stateside James Bond, must display skill at hang gliding, sky diving, piloting and driving, as well as marksmanship, to triumph over the international conspiracy known as Viper.

SCIENCE FICTION SLEUTHS

What do gamers love even more than a mystery? A mystery that's also a science-fiction story! Tomorrow's detectives are already solving cases today—on the computer screen.

Those magnificent Murrys, who gave us *Championship Boxing*, *Ancient Art of War* and *Ancient Art of War at Sea*, now display their mastery of another category, the science-fiction mystery. Their interactive graphics adventures, *Manhunter: New York* and *Manhunter: San Francisco* (Sierra for IBM PC, Amiga, Apple IIGS, Atari ST and Macintosh), present the exploits of a detective walking an ethical tightrope in a near-future Earth enslaved by an alien conqueror.

In the first installment of the *Manhunter* saga, the Orb dictatorship enlists the player to spy on the human population and ferret out revolutionary plans. The Orbs return in the second game, codesigned by Barbara Ward, and there's a whole new assortment of brain-teasing mysteries for the relentless Manhunter to penetrate.

The *Manhunter* adventures are more than simple tales of crimes and arrests. At a crucial point in each game, the player must choose to remain a minion of the Orbs or stop collaborating and join the human rebellion. The program supports the consequences of either alternative, so this is a true decision point. Not many games inject such moral considerations, and it gives *Manhunter: New York* and *Manhunter: San Francisco* a unique feel and subtlety often found in mysteries, but seldom in computer software.

Impossible Mission II (Epyx for most computer systems) is a rarity, an action-oriented mystery. In this sequel to the 1983 hit, the futuristic detective must survive a trip through the eight-tower complex of the nefarious Elvin Atombender in northwest Los Angeles. The player searches for clues to the passcodes that allow entry to each of the subsidiary towers and then pieces together the musical code that enables the character to enter the central tower and arrest Elvin before the time limit ticks past.

Ace Powers, the space-faring hero of *The Omnicron Conspiracy* (Epyx for IBM PC) has to worry about both big-time crime and saving the known universe in this interactive graphics adventure by Subway Software and programmer Jim Nangana. Humorous touches enliven the interstellar quest for a spaceship that vanished, only to appear on the other side of the galaxy.

THE SUMMATION

Clearly, computerists' love of mysteries is far more than mere infatuation. There are plenty of evildoers in the microverse and, fortunately for us mystery fans, enough excellent mystery strategy, adventure and action games to take *many* bites out of crime.

HIRYU's SECRET MISSION:

A Player's Guide to

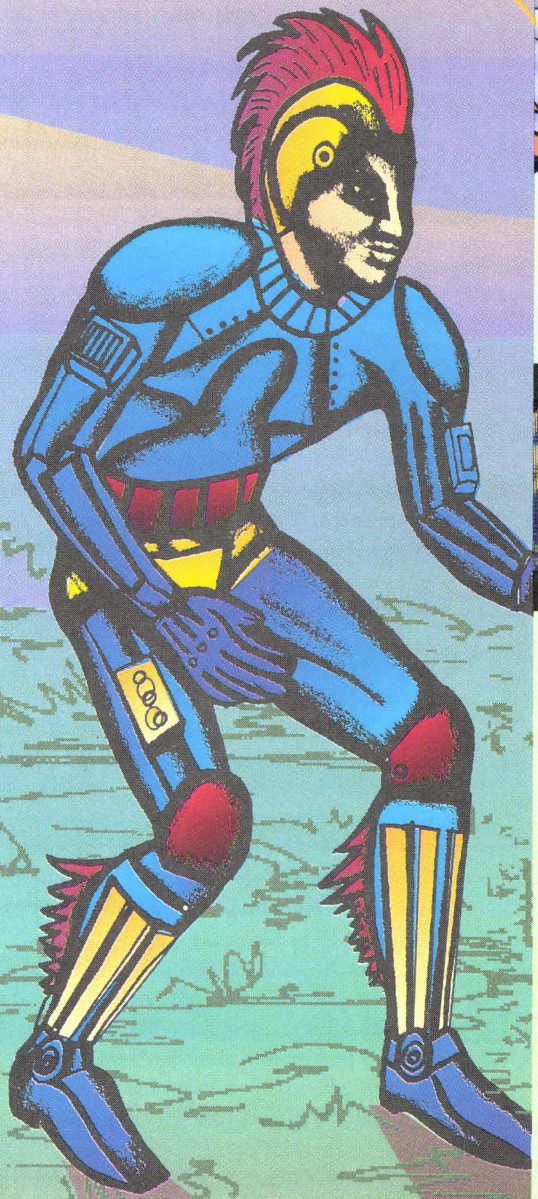
STRIDER

Part II

by Clayton Walnum

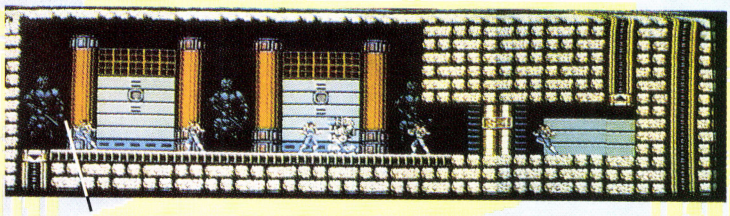
WARNING: If you already own Strider, we suggest you play it before reading the information presented here. Studying our maps prematurely may decrease your enjoyment of the game. However, if you haven't yet purchased Strider, you may browse through this article in order to decide if the game is something you'd enjoy. It's unlikely you'll remember many of the clues once you do start to play.

Last month we looked at Part 1 of this intriguing and challenging game from Capcom. This month we'll finish things up by examining the Chinese, African and Australian bases. We'll also travel to Los Angeles and, finally, to the Red Dragon Base, where your arch enemy, Matic, lies in wait.
Can you defeat Matic and bring down the Zain mind-control conspiracy? Let's find out!



COMPUTER ART BY NAYLOR/FERGUSON

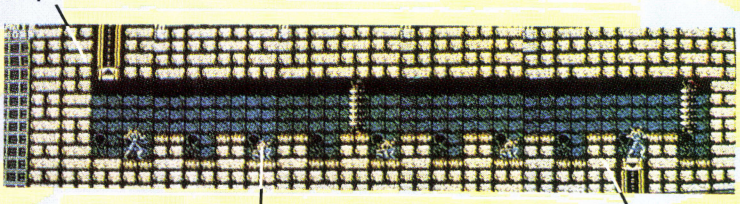
CHINA, STRIP 1



This way down to Strip 2.

CHINA, STRIP 2

This transporter leads up to Strip 1.

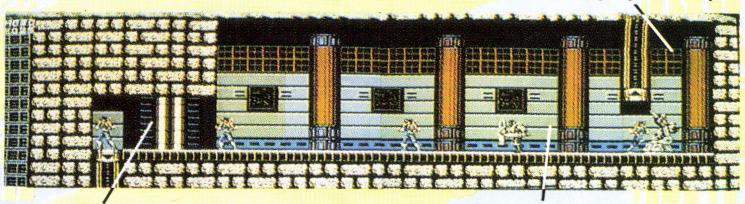


Kneel to let the knives pass over you; then quickly jump to the next pit, working your way forward slowly .

Take this transporter down to Strip 3.

CHINA, STRIP 3

This way up to Strip 2.

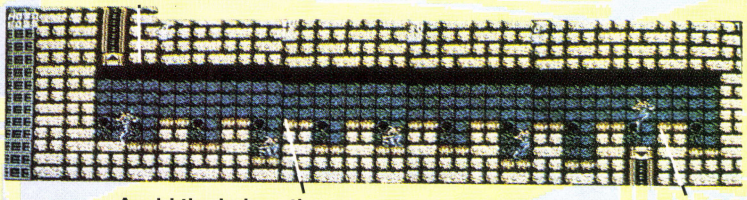


Transporter to Strip 4.

This Badger follows your movement. When you jump, he does too. Attack him from below.

CHINA, STRIP 4

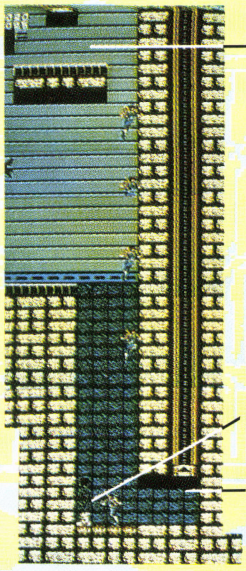
This way up to Strip 3.



Avoid the knives the same way you did before. The deeper pits make this section a little tougher than the first one though.

Down to Strip 5.

CHINA, STRIP 5

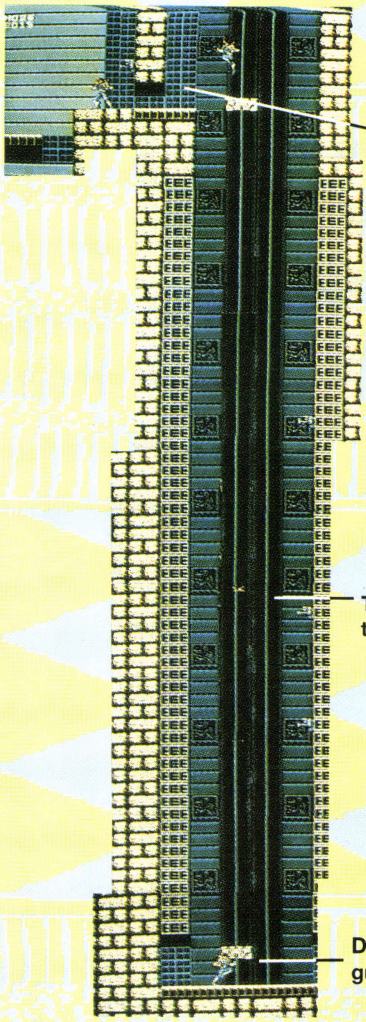


You can go left or down from here. The first time through, drop down to the right.

Here are your attack boots!

Take this transporter, which will bring you all the way back to the top of the base. From the top work your way back down to the top of this strip, but then go left instead of down.

CHINA, STRIP 7



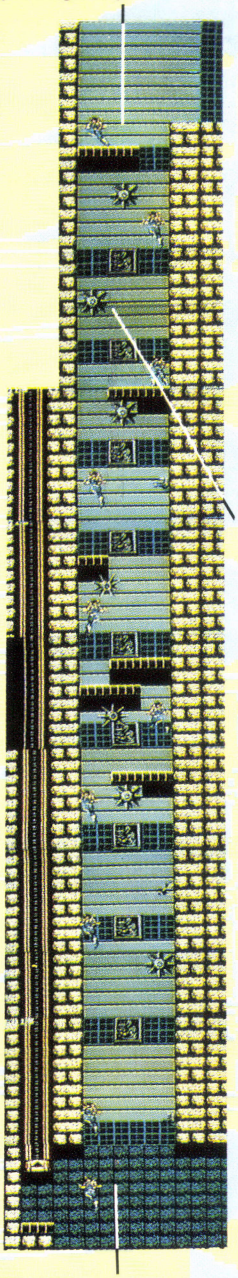
Leap off the elevator and continue to the left (to Strip 8).

Take this elevator all the way to the top.

Don't let these wall-mounted guns get you.

CHINA, STRIP 8

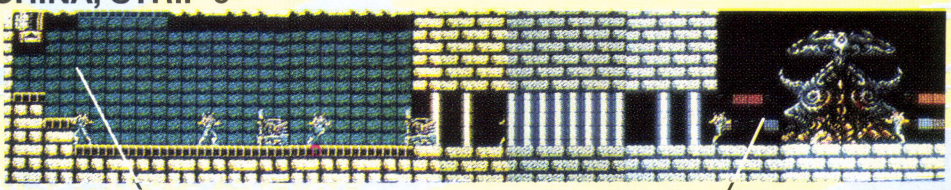
After getting off the elevator, jump down this vertical passageway.



Watch out for the spiked wheels—some of them move.

Exit right to Strip 9.

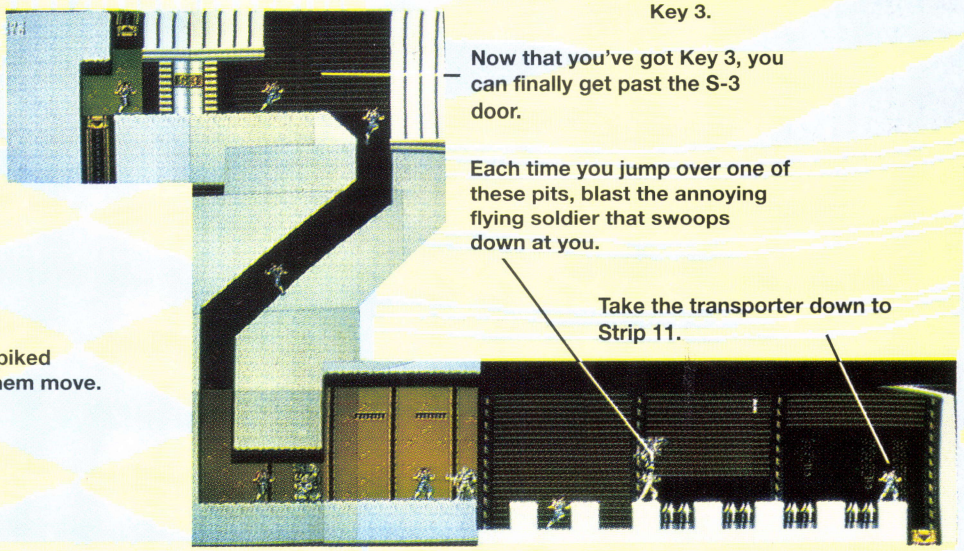
CHINA, STRIP 9



This transporter will take you back to the top of the vertical passageway (to Strip 8).

Beat the circling square by blasting it as it approaches; then jump to let it pass beneath you. When it starts firing, destroy the statue by hitting it repeatedly in the center. Once you finish the job, you'll acquire Key 3.

KAZAKH,STRIP 10

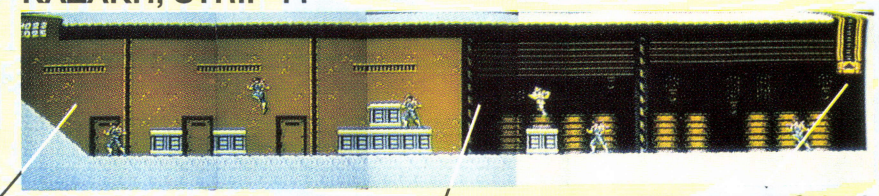


Now that you've got Key 3, you can finally get past the S-3 door.

Each time you jump over one of these pits, blast the annoying flying soldier that swoops down at you.

Take the transporter down to Strip 11.

KAZAKH, STRIP 11



Go up this slope to Strip 12.

The soldiers that attack here are wimps.

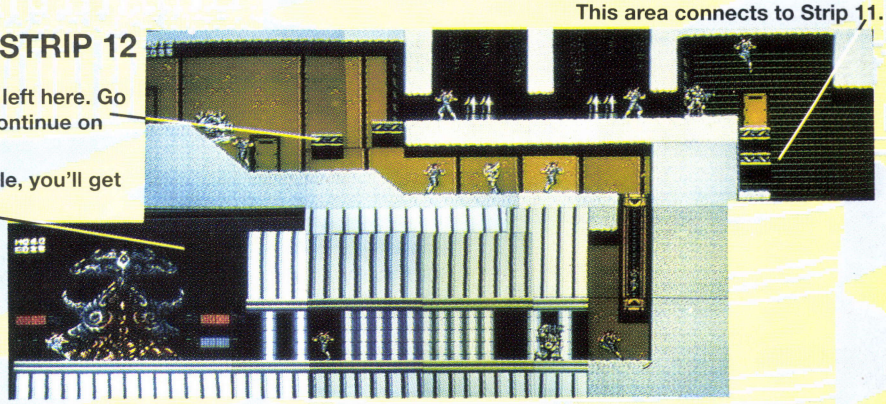
This way up to Strip 10.

This area connects to Strip 11.

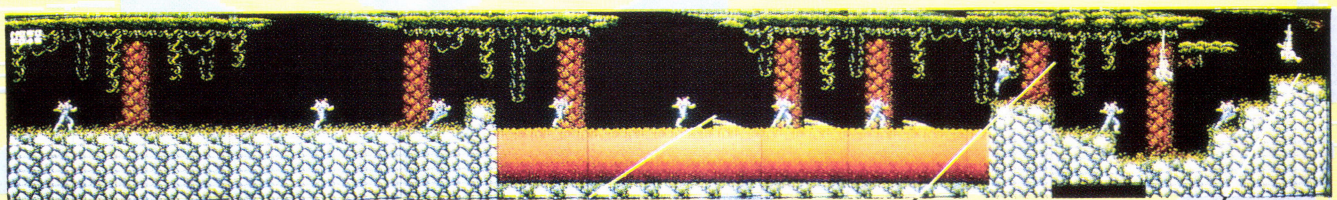
KAZAKH, STRIP 12

Don't bother going left here. Go right instead and continue on the path down.

After the usual battle, you'll get File 5 here.



AFRICA, STRIP 13

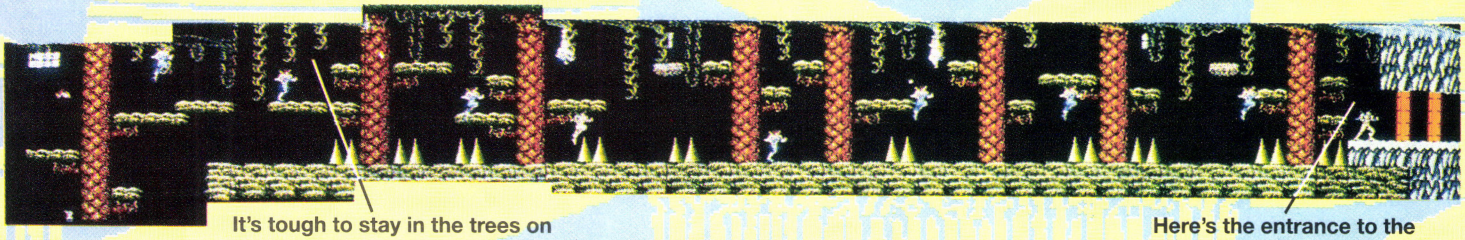


The alligators here won't bother you if you give them time to sink back into the muck.

Watch out for the gunmen in the trees.

Climb up to the next jungle level (not shown).

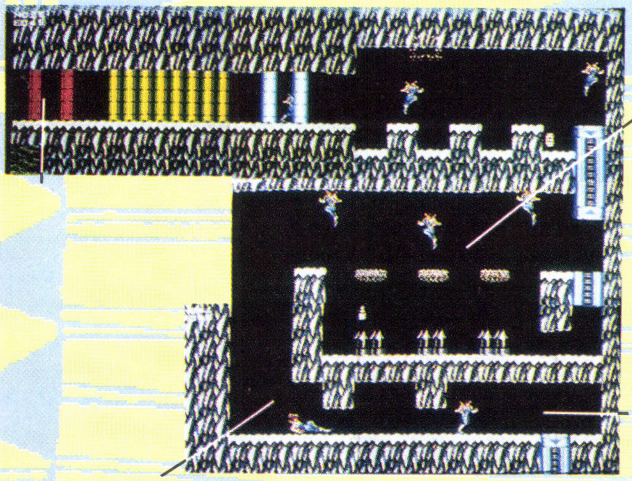
AFRICA, STRIP 14



It's tough to stay in the trees on this level. If you fall you'll have to jump over many dangerous spikes to get to the base entrance.

Here's the entrance to the African base, continued on Strip 15.

AFRICA, STRIP 15

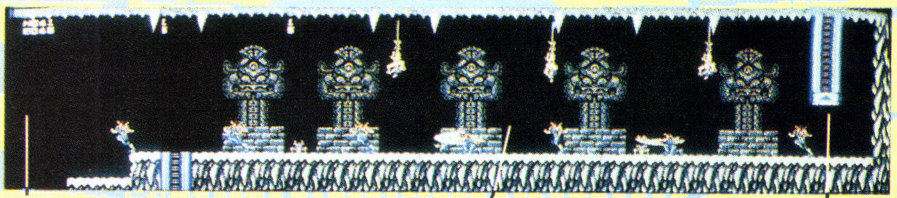


You'll need to be light-footed to get over this row of nests. It'll probably take you more than one try.

This transporter will take you down to Strip 16.

Use your slide ability to get under these obstacles.

AFRICA, STRIP 16

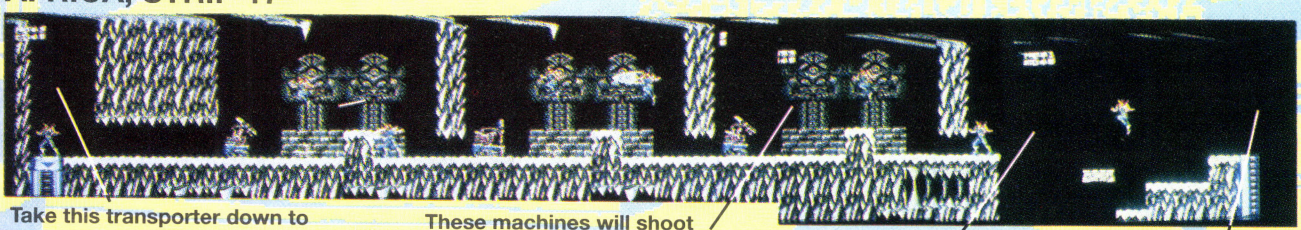


Exit left to Strip 17.

These hanging soldiers won't hit you if you keep moving.

This way up to Strip 15.

AFRICA, STRIP 17



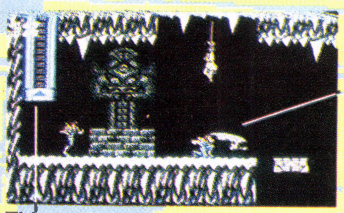
Take this transporter down to Strip 18.

These machines will shoot three energy balls at you. Jump over the balls, then blast the machine before it can fire again. This maneuver takes tricky timing.

Do your best to avoid falling down this passage. Due to *Strider*'s clumsy jumping control, getting back up is almost impossible.

This way to Strip 16.

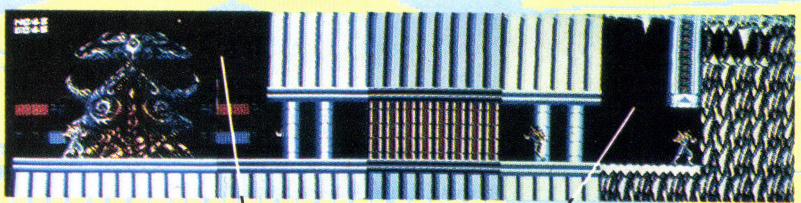
AFRICA, STRIP 18



Wait here for the moving platform that will take you to Strip 19. Here is the hardest part of this area. Jumping across the moving platforms is extremely difficult.

This transporter will take you back to Strip 17.

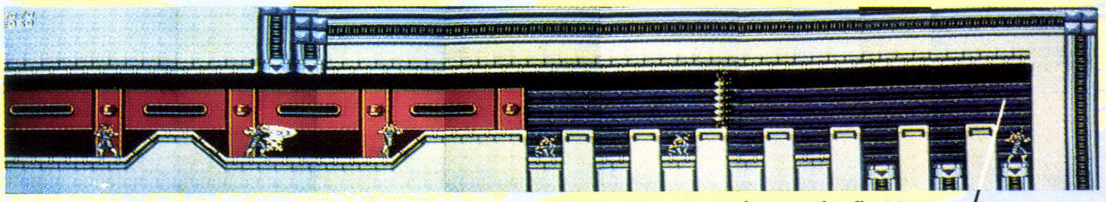
AFRICA, STRIP 19



Here's another statue room to beat. You'll get File 6 here.

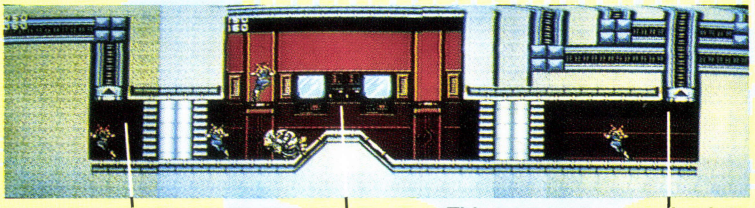
Going left here will bring you back to Strip 18.

LOS ANGELES, STRIP 20



Ignore the first two transporters here. They only take you back to the beginning. Ride the third transporter down to Strip 21.

LOS ANGELES, STRIP 21

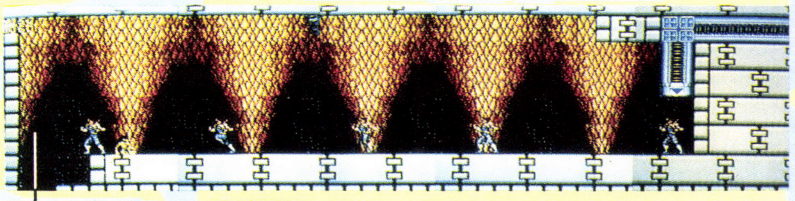


Take this transporter to Strip 22.

This transporter goes back to Strip 20.

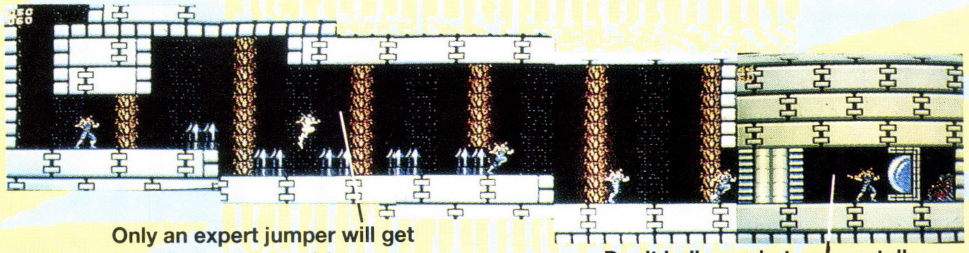
You must fight another motorcycle soldier here. You'll acquire a couple of bruises, but this one's easier to beat than the first.

LOS ANGELES, STRIP 22



Jump down to get to Strip 23.

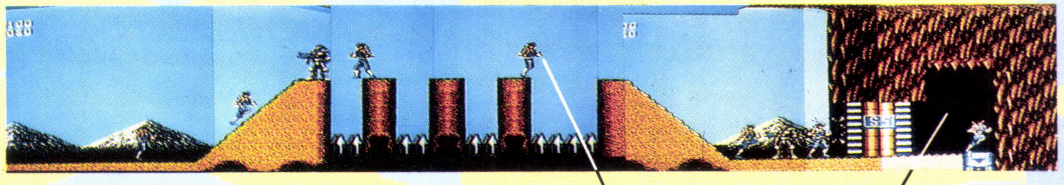
LOS ANGELES, STRIP 23



Only an expert jumper will get over these spikes without taking some damage.

Don't believe what anyone tells you. You *can* blast your way through this glass. After you do, you'll get Key 5.

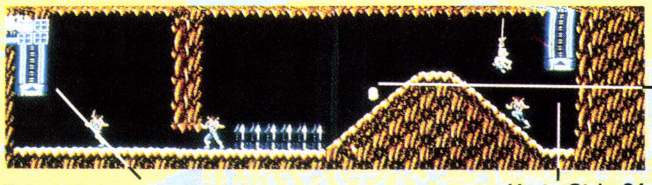
AUSTRALIA, STRIP 24



To make this jump, you need to stand as close to the edge as you can.

Take this transporter down to Strip 25.

AUSTRALIA, STRIP 25

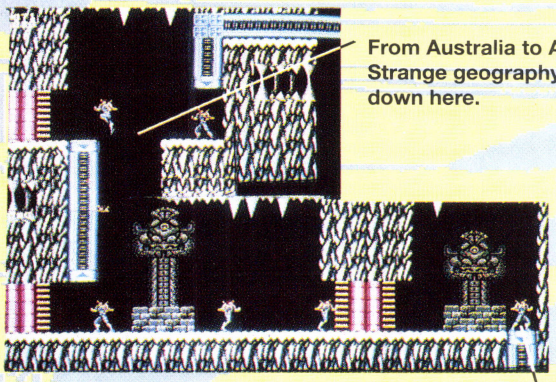


Run down the slope and take a running jump to get over the deadly spikes. It's tough to clear them all.

Take this transporter up to Strip 26.

Up to Strip 24.

AFRICA, STRIP 26

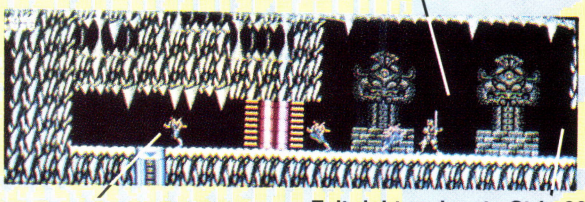


From Australia to Africa? Strange geography! Jump down here.

This way down to Strip 27.

AFRICA, STRIP 27

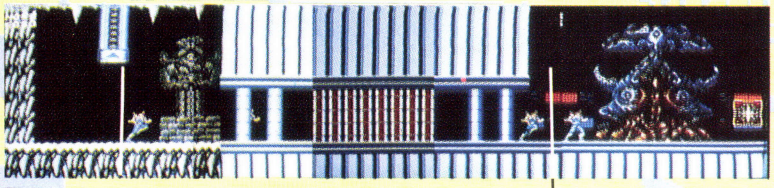
Expect a surprise attack by Dragon Friend here. Luckily, he's easy to beat.



Take this transporter down to Strip 28.

Exit right and up to Strip 26.

AFRICA, STRIP 28

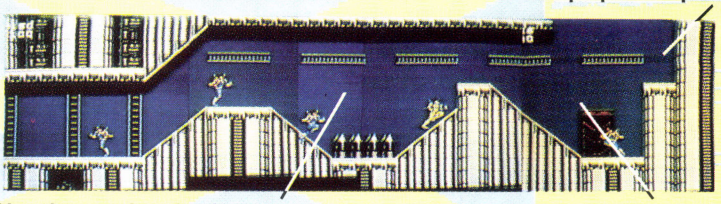


This way up to Strip 27.

Beat this statue, and you'll get access to the Red Dragon Base, where Matic is waiting for you.

RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 29

Jump up to Strip 30.



Use the acceleration jump to get safely over these spikes.

Use the acceleration jump here too, in order to get up on the right-hand platform. You can use your high jump as well.

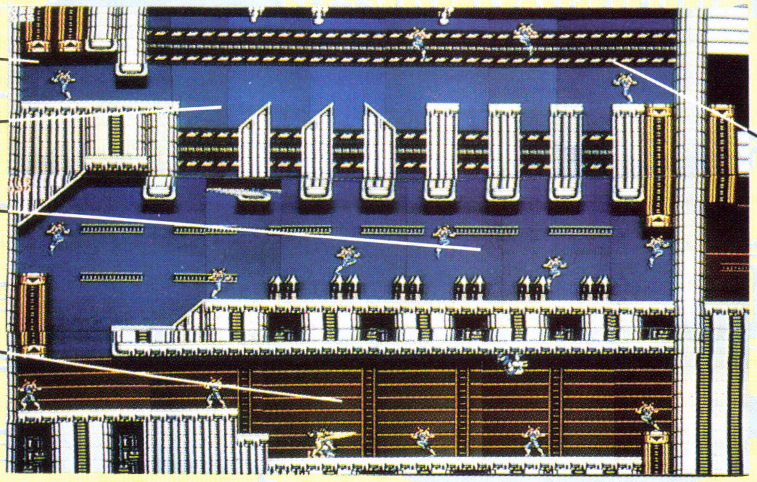
RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 30

Take the right-hand transporter to Strip 31.

On this last pedestal, use your acceleration jump in order to make it to the ledge.

Only a top-notch jumper will get over all these spikes scot-free.

Run through here quickly, and the ceiling walkers won't catch up to you.



More jumping here. Keep going so the lasers on the ceiling don't get a chance to zap you.

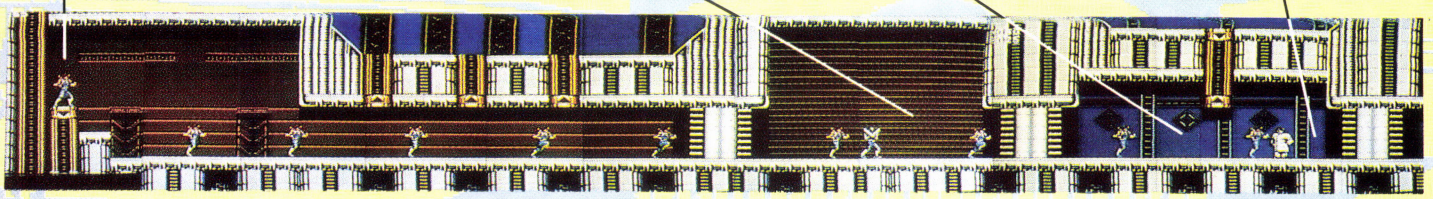
RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 31

This transporter goes down to Strip 30.

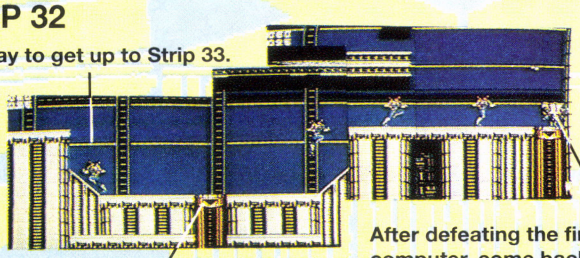
Here you'll fight Flash Blade, one of the boss soldiers. Hit him while he's in the air, and he'll go into a spin. Avoid him while he's spinning. When he comes out of it, hit him again. Eventually, you'll get him.

After talking to the person here, go up this transporter to Strip 32.

After destroying the two main computers, these doors will let you through. Beyond them lies your last challenge, a battle against several boss soldiers and, finally, your confrontation with Matic.



RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 32

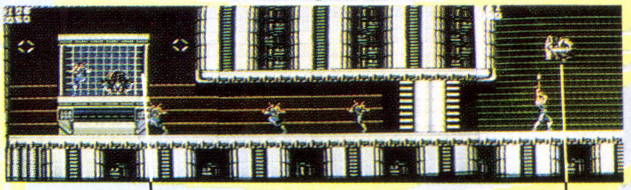


This way to get up to Strip 33.

This transporter goes down to Strip 31.

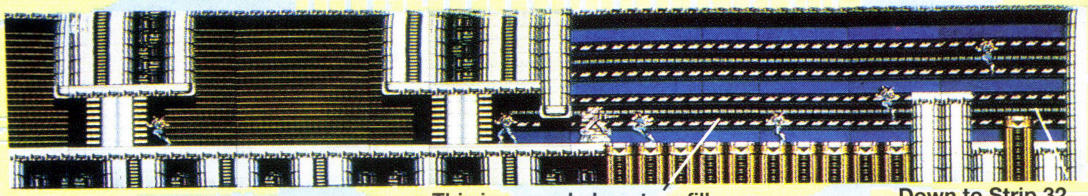
After defeating the first main computer, come back to this transporter. It'll take you to Strip 34.

RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 33



Here's the first computer. A couple of hits is all it takes to reduce this machine to useless nuts and bolts.

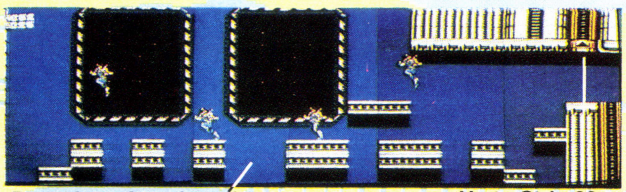
This Badger is guarding the first main computer. He's easier to beat than the one you had to fight in China.



This is a good place to refill your energy. The guns at the beginning and end of this area will keep returning every time you destroy them. Just run back and forth taking out the guns and collecting energy capsules.

Down to Strip 32.

RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 34

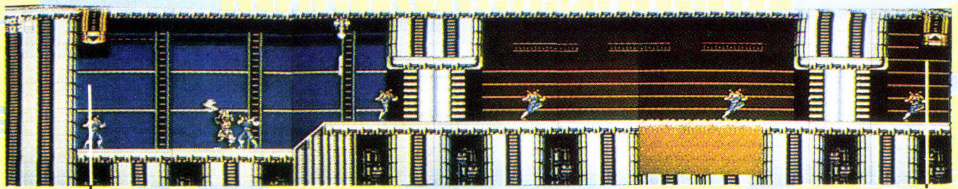


Drop down here in order to get to Strip 35.

Up to Strip 33.

RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 35

You'll face your second fish soldier in this room. Beat him just as you did the first one way back in Egypt.

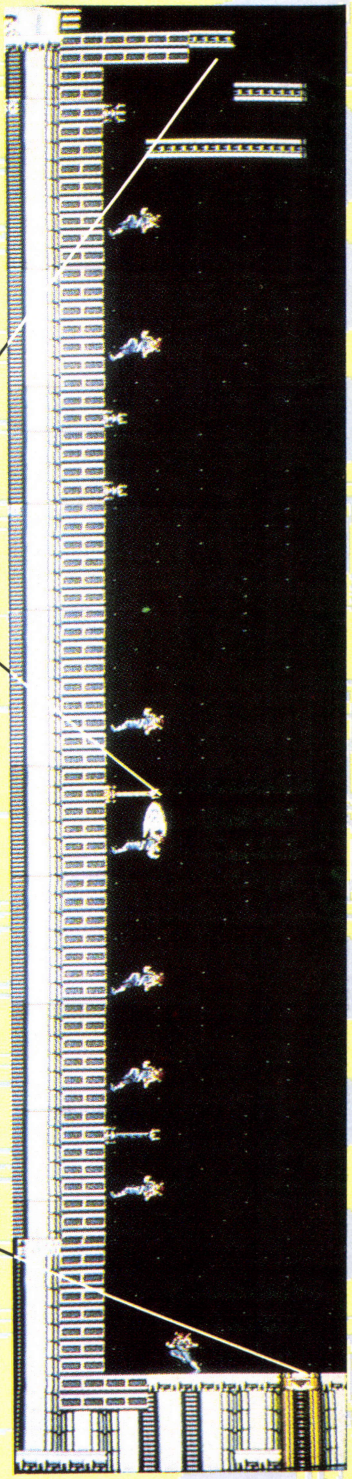


Up to Strip 34.

Here's another Dragon Friend, a boss soldier who's not as tough as he looks.

Take this transporter up to Strip 36.

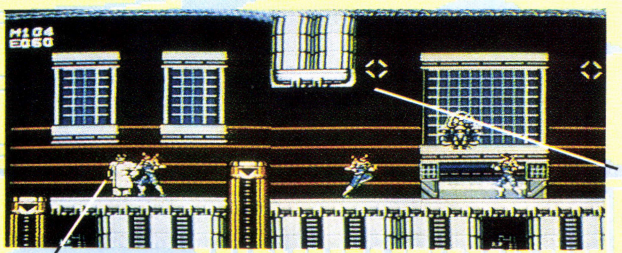
RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 36



Enter the door at the top of this ledge in order to get to Strip 37.

Slowly climb the wall using your magnetic boots, and zap these spinning guns. Don't get too close to them. They can do a lot of fast damage.

RED DRAGON BASE, STRIP 37



Talk with this guy to see what he has to say.

This transporter connects with Strip 35.

Here's the last main computer. Destroy it and then go back to Strip 31, where the special door will now let you through. You're on the last leg of your mission now. Good luck!

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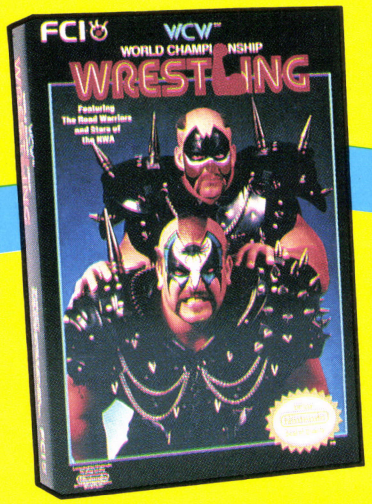

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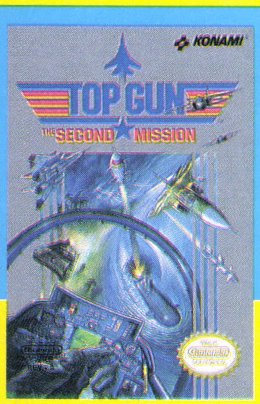

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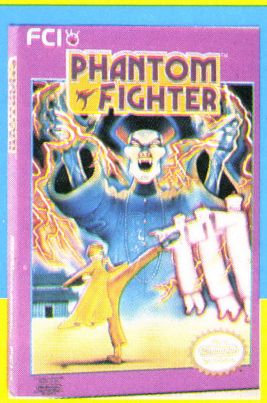

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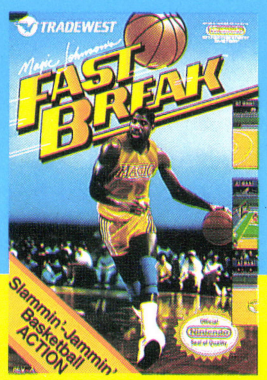

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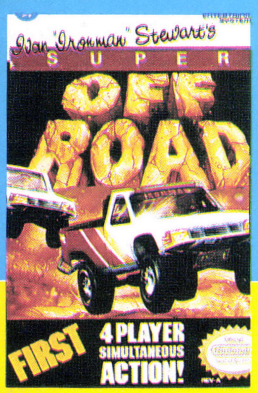

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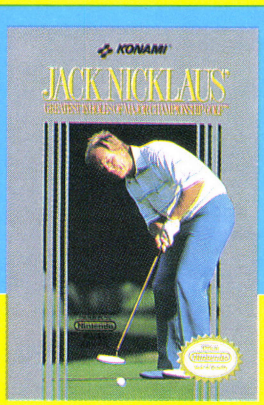

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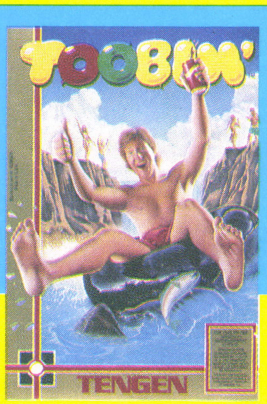

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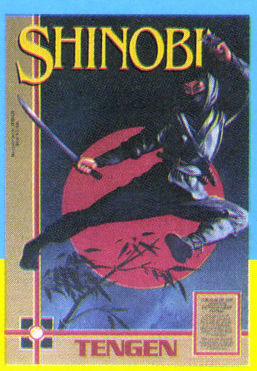

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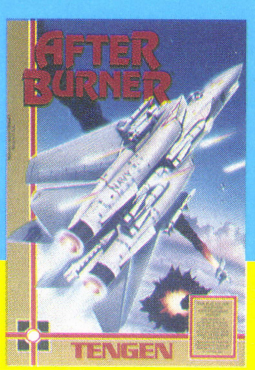

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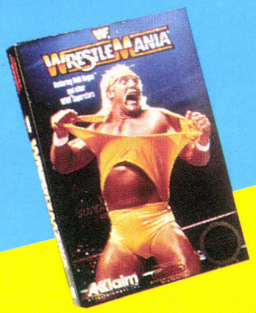

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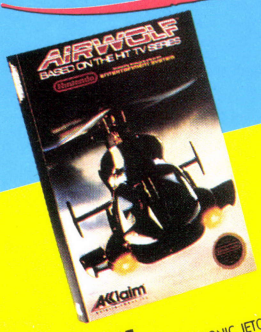

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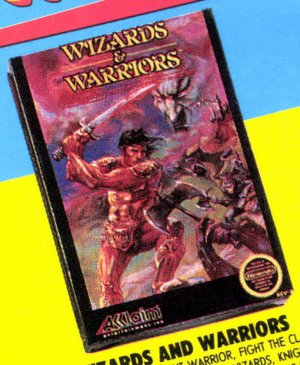

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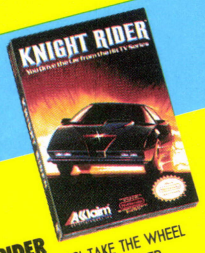

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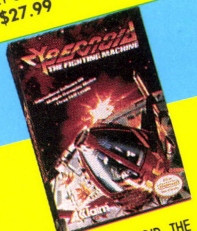

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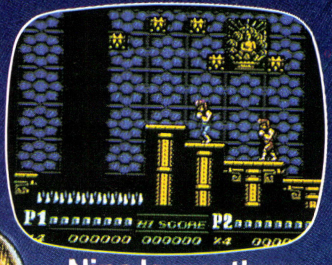

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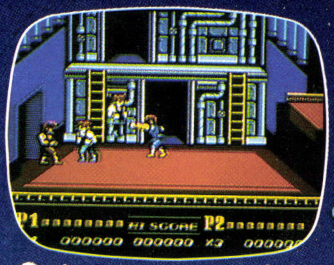

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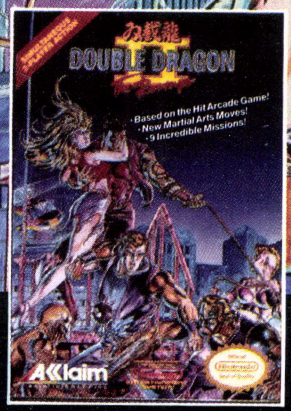

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In the following pages, we'll take you on a guided tour of this dungeon extravaganza. Along the way we'll give you important tips that will improve your game play. We'll tell you everything you need to know, from where to begin your quest to where to find the Ora Stone and how to defeat the horrible Natas.

If you don't own *Dungeon Explorer*, you can use this article as an in-depth review to help you decide if this game is something you'd like. If you don't own a TurboGrafx-16, this article could be hazardous to your bank account. You may want a TurboGrafx-16 when you're done reading.

Don't say we didn't warn you!

NE: A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO

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by Clayton Walnum

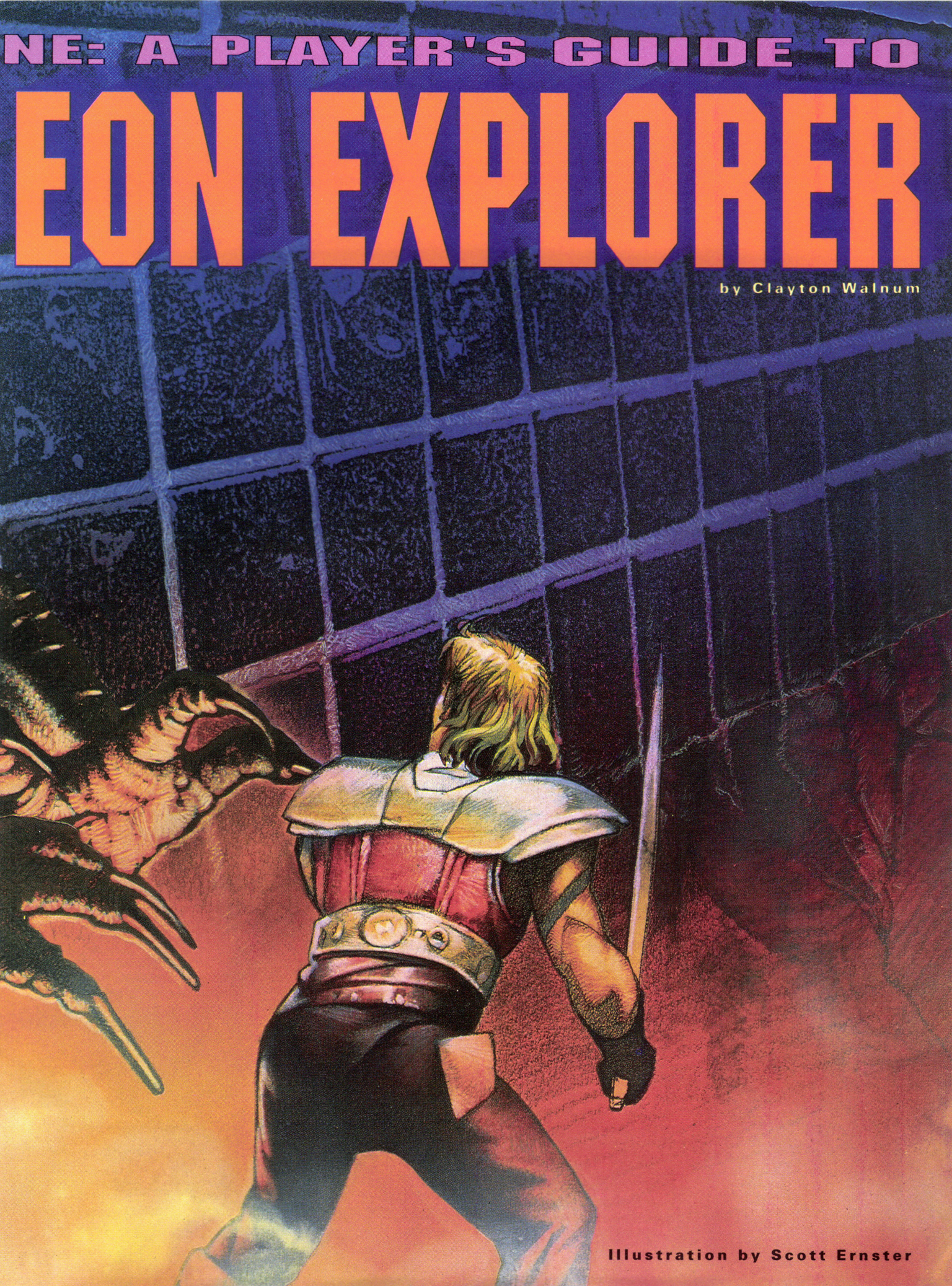
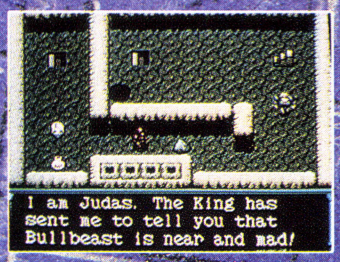


Illustration by Scott Ernster

LEVEL 1

Visit the king first. He'll have some instructions for you as well as some helpful magic. Each time you complete a level, the king will give you new hints.

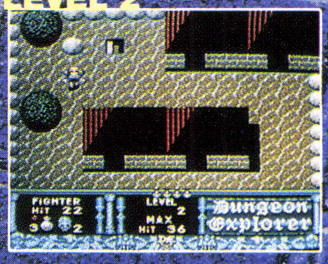
Your first destination is this stairway south of Axis Castle.



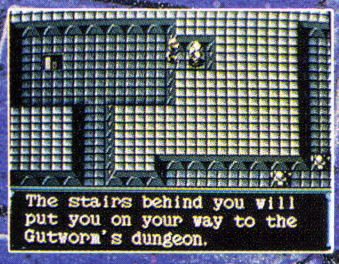
For now, don't bother trying to get past the rock blocking the lower corridor here. Once you complete the level, the guard will disappear, and you'll be able to push the rock out of the way.

Search everywhere in each room. You never know what prizes you might find.

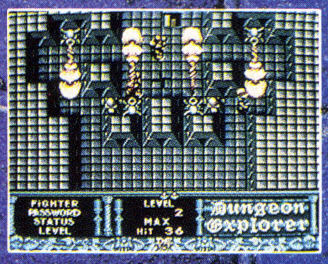
LEVEL 2



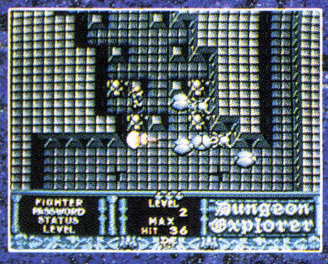
Level 2 begins in this village.



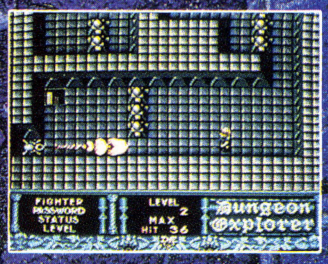
Sometimes guards in the dungeons will have hints for you.



You have to get to the stairway at the top. With practice you can destroy a flame thrower



This is a particularly difficult area. You must shoot out the flame thrower while avoiding the other attacking creatures at the same time. Don't get frustrated—you'll make it with a little practice.



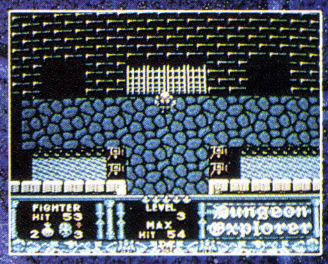
Blast out this flame thrower, and then run for the exit.

LEVEL 3

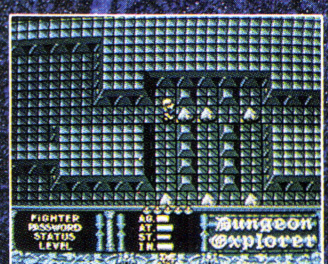
With the Ruvik statue gone, you can push these rocks from your path. Take the stairway down to the Level 3 entrance.

Level 3 begins by this peaceful brook.

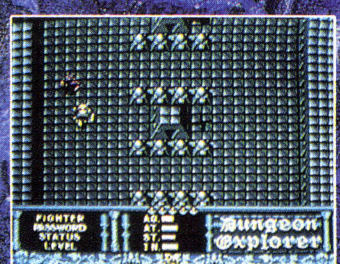
In the first dungeon, talk to the princess.



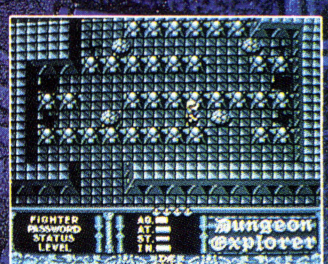
There's a task you must complete in order to get past these gates.

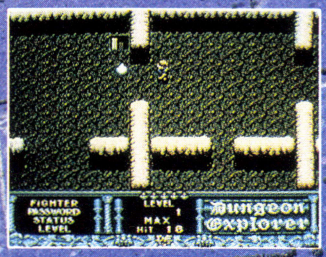


Here you have a choice of two exits. They both lead to the same dungeon, but one of them will give you a shorter route.

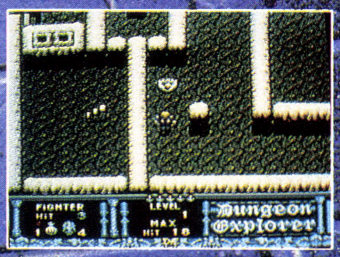


Goblins move quickly. Don't let their numbers increase. Shoot them as soon as they appear, or you'll quickly be outnumbered.





This little ball of light will appear infrequently and head straight for you. Shoot it quickly. Its touch means instant death.

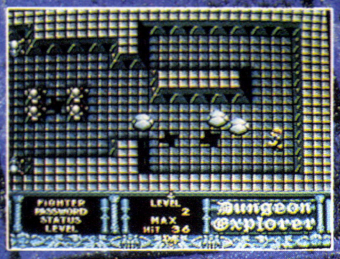


Enclosed stairways like this are accessible only when you've completed the level and are leaving.

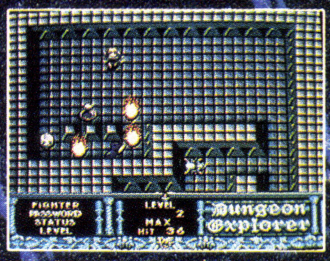
To get past areas like this, learn the correct positions in which to push the rocks. If you do it wrong, just go back the way you came and return. The rocks will have returned to their original positions.

Bullbeast is the first boss creature you'll battle. He isn't too tough—just blast him as fast as you can.

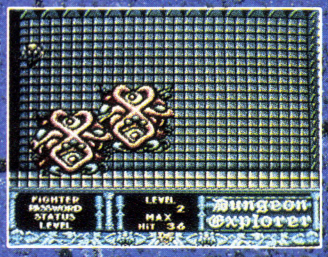
without losing any hit points. In between its flame bursts, run out from cover, shoot it once, then run back out of the way to avoid the next burst of flame. Repeat these moves until the flame thrower is destroyed.



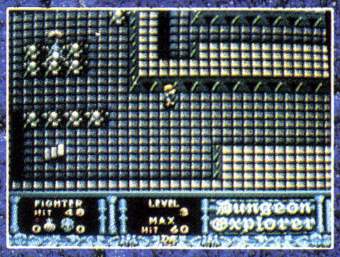
The instant you appear on this screen, destroy all the creatures there. If you don't, they'll quickly overwhelm you.



With good timing, you can run between these circling flames and grab the prizes. Once in the circle don't run right out. Instead, follow the circle around, running fast enough to stay ahead of the flames.



Gutworm is the second boss. You have to destroy both segments individually. Do your best to stay far away from him as you shoot.



After defeating Gutworm, you'll have to fight your way through a couple more dungeons. The stairway here will bring you back to the village. If you follow the corridor to the right, you enter Level 3.

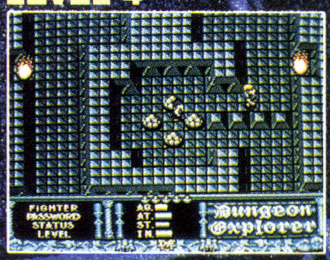
Upon emerging from the dungeon, blast away the Ruvik statue. You'll then be able to move the rocks blocking the entrance and thus have easy access to the stairway.

LEVEL 4

That task is to destroy all of these statues. There are a lot of them!

Boss 3 is easy to beat. Just shoot away all three flowers. It's easiest to do your shooting from one side or the other, rather than straight on.

Now the princess is safe. If you want to use the princess as your character, enter the password she gives you.



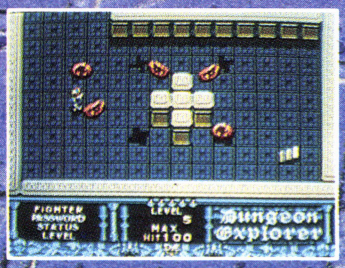
Shoot only enough rocks to get past. Leave this guard trapped, or you'll have big trouble.

LEVEL 5

Yikes! Rocks sliding from both directions! Step between them, blast the one closest to you, then quickly turn and blast the second one before it can reach you. Don't forget to take out the generators too, or the rocks will just keep coming.

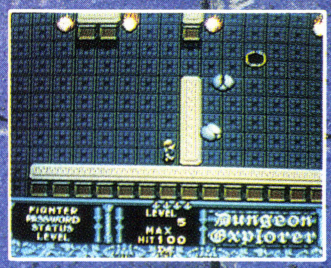
Here's Catakiller, the Level 4 boss. His head is his only vulnerable area. He'll follow you around, so you have to keep running, and fire at him whenever you get a chance.

Many of the monsters' holes can be destroyed while you hide behind a rock. Although the rock won't block their fire, it will keep them from ganging up on you.



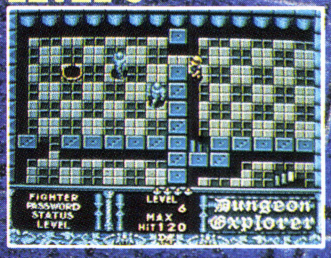
Here's the exit you want. Destroy these slimes and their generators before they become too numerous to handle.

This bridge leads to Water Castle, in which you'll find the next boss.

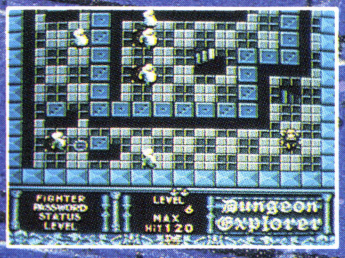


Some floors have strange powers. In this area, if you stay next to the wall, you won't get dragged into the flames.

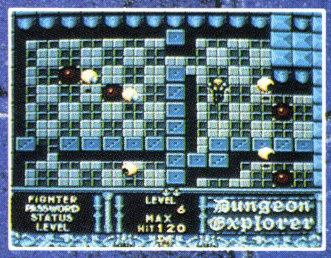
LEVEL 6



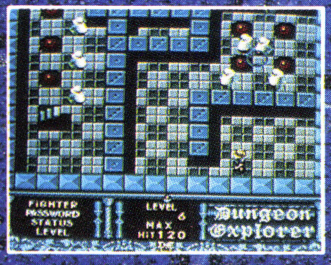
In Cherry Tower the battle gets tougher the higher you go.



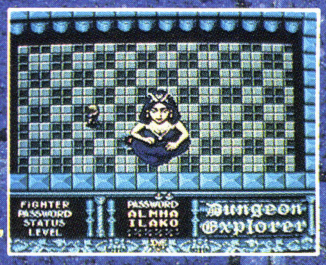
Don't take the time to kill every creature in your path. You'll never make it to the tower's top if you do. Just get to the stairs as fast as you can, blasting only those creatures that block your path.



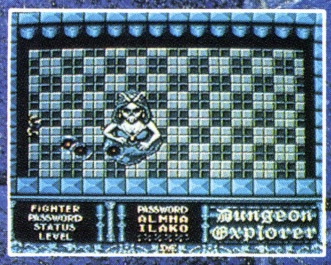
If you keep firing as you walk, these flying eyeballs won't present too much of a difficulty.



These enemies close in on you quickly. Blast as many as you can, but don't stop running.

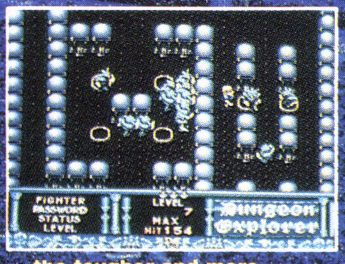


At last, it's Alexis, Level 6 boss. She's difficult to defeat, can take a lot of damage and is a good fighter. If you've got less than four lives left when you get here, chances are you aren't going to make it.

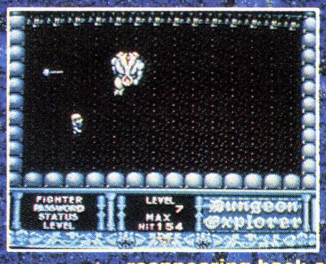


When she's about half-defeated, Alexis will lose her beauty.

The deeper you get into this dungeon...

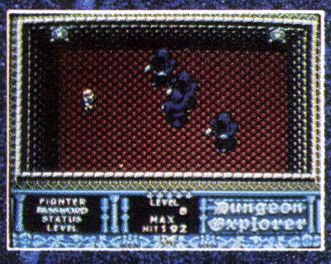


...the tougher and more numerous your enemies become.

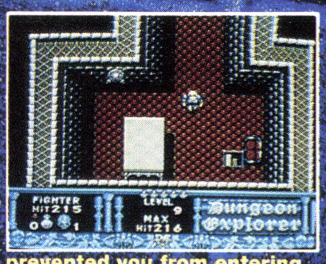


The Level 7 boss is Cyclopus. Blast him a few times, and he'll disappear for a moment, reappearing back away from you. Keep doing this, and you'll destroy him in no time.

LEVEL 9

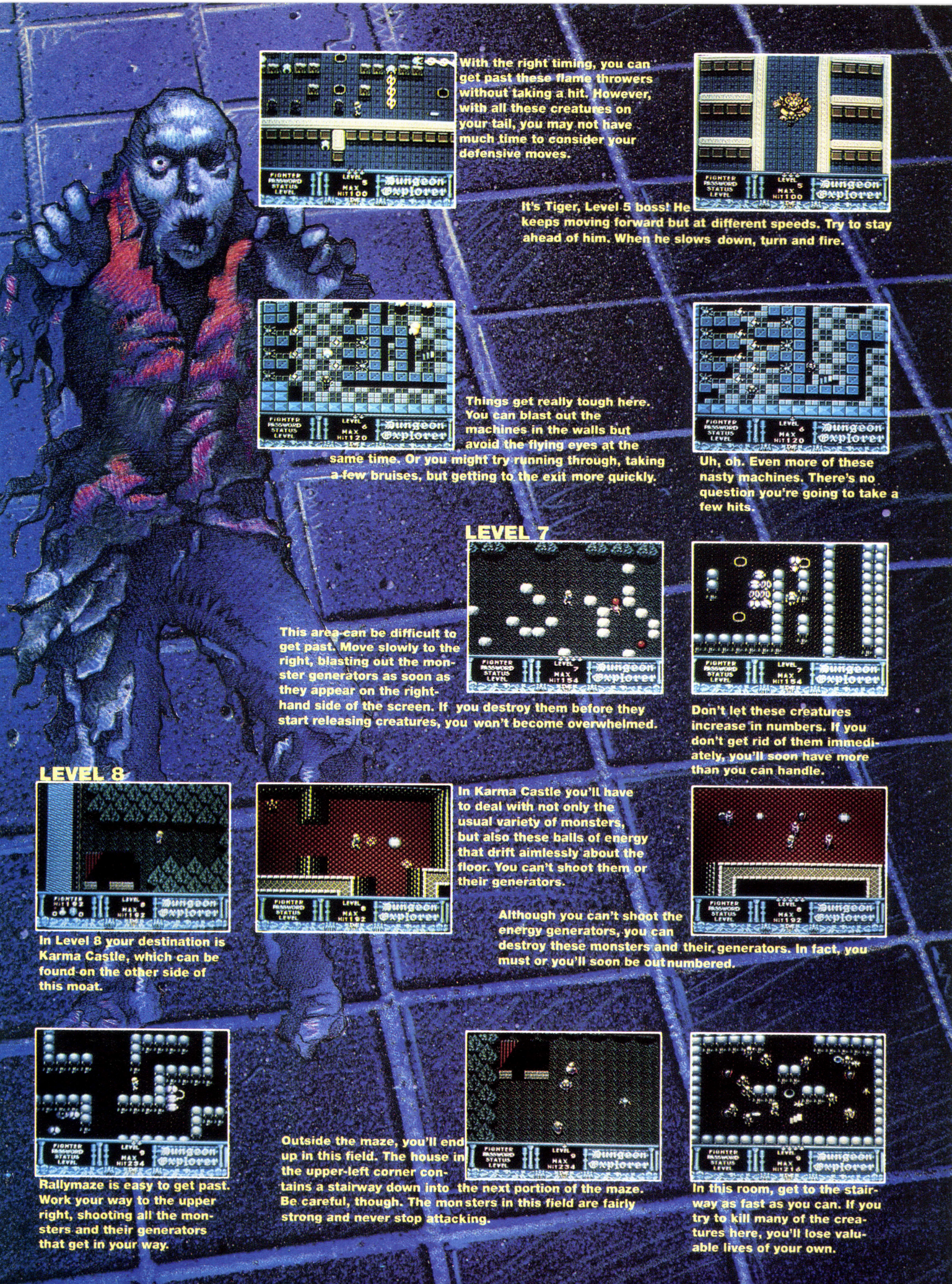


The Reapers of Death guard the last chamber in Karma Castle. Stay far away from them, or they'll corner you. When you defeat the first four, others will appear. Be prepared!



Take the right-hand corridor in Axis Castle and you'll find that the doorways that once prevented you from entering here are gone. Take the stairway down to Rallymaze.

Before you get to the maze, you'll walk down a long corridor. Take the last stairway down.



With the right timing, you can get past these flame throwers without taking a hit. However, with all these creatures on your tail, you may not have much time to consider your defensive moves.

It's Tiger, Level 5 boss! He keeps moving forward but at different speeds. Try to stay ahead of him. When he slows down, turn and fire.

Things get really tough here. You can blast out the machines in the walls but avoid the flying eyes at the same time. Or you might try running through, taking a few bruises, but getting to the exit more quickly.

Uh, oh. Even more of these nasty machines. There's no question you're going to take a few hits.

LEVEL 7

This area can be difficult to get past. Move slowly to the right, blasting out the monster generators as soon as they appear on the right-hand side of the screen. If you destroy them before they start releasing creatures, you won't become overwhelmed.

Don't let these creatures increase in numbers. If you don't get rid of them immediately, you'll soon have more than you can handle.

LEVEL 8

In Level 8 your destination is Karma Castle, which can be found on the other side of this moat.

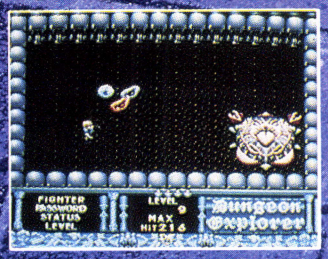
In Karma Castle you'll have to deal with not only the usual variety of monsters, but also these balls of energy that drift aimlessly about the floor. You can't shoot them or their generators.

Although you can't shoot the energy generators, you can destroy these monsters and their generators. In fact, you must or you'll soon be outnumbered.

Rallymaze is easy to get past. Work your way to the upper right, shooting all the monsters and their generators that get in your way.

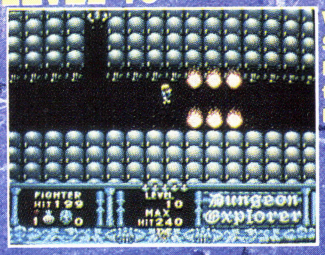
Outside the maze, you'll end up in this field. The house in the upper-left corner contains a stairway down into the next portion of the maze. Be careful, though. The monsters in this field are fairly strong and never stop attacking.

In this room, get to the stairway as fast as you can. If you try to kill many of the creatures here, you'll lose valuable lives of your own.



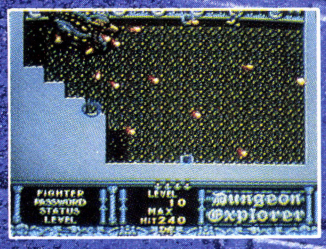
At the end of Level 9, take on Splatter Slime. He's a tough creature to defeat, since he sends dozens of slimes after you. Stay as far from him as you can, keeping the number of slimes on the screen to a minimum. Not only are the slimes dangerous, but they also block your shots, protecting Splatter Slime from your attack.

LEVEL 10

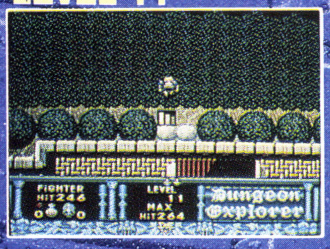


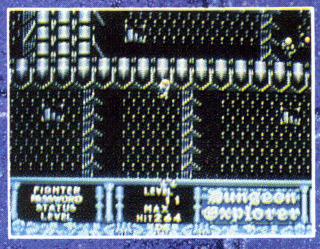
When you've defeated Splatter Slime, go back to Rallymaze, where you'll find that the flame wall will now let you pass.

LEVEL 11



Gargon is the Level 10 boss. If you stand by the sixth pillar to the right, up at the top of the screen, most of his shots will miss you. Keep firing. It'll take a little while to finish the job.

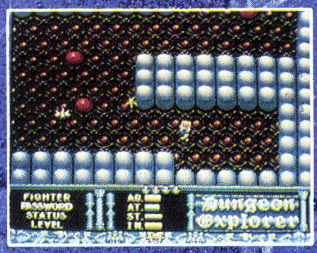




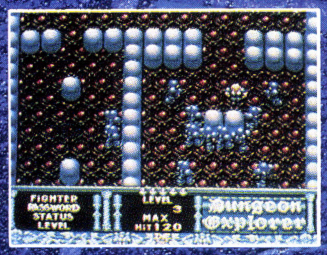
You must navigate a long maze of stairways in Ratonix Dungeon. It's important that you keep track of which stairway goes where, or you may never make it out.

LEVEL 12

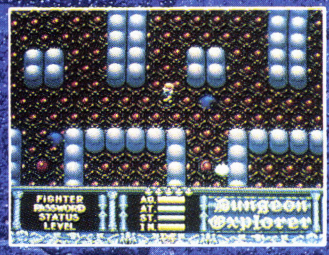
Once you fight your way out of Level 11, you'll end up here. Straight ahead is the entrance to Mistos Dungeon, Level 12.



In the beginning Mistos Dungeon isn't too formidable. Shoot these monster generators from as far away as possible, and you'll have little difficulty.



Run like a madman through here. These blue robots will quickly overcome you if you don't.

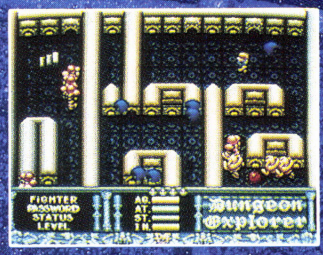


If you run left or right here, this room will go on forever. Instead, you should move down.

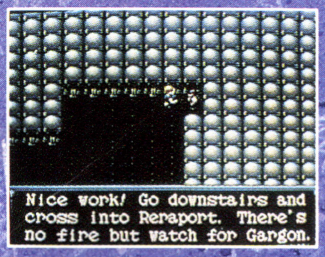
It's Halatos! If you stand near the upper-right corner (in front of the second block down), you'll get hit less by this creature's fiery breath.

Balamous Tower is your next stop.

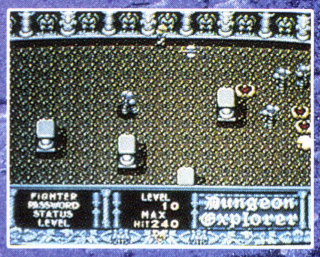
In the tower you'll have to fight your way up many stories.



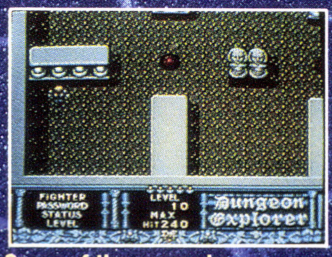
The twisting passageways make getting to the stairway a real challenge. Hope you brought a lot of magic with you.



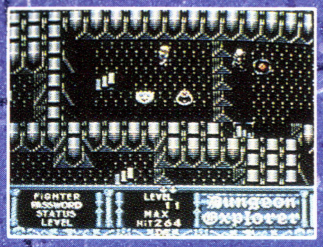
Talk to this man. He'll give you helpful information.



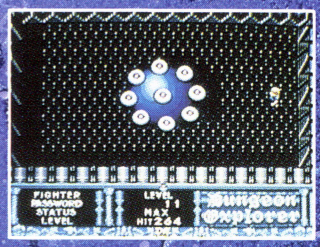
In this type of room, your best bet is to stay close to the walls. Don't bother roaming around the room trying to defeat every monster. That's a waste of time (unless you're trying to gather up some magic).



Some of the rooms have obstacles you must walk around. Still, stay as close to the walls as you can.



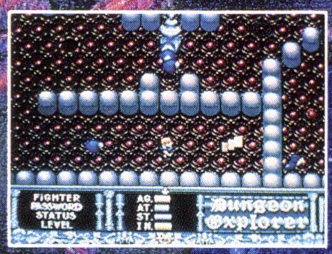
Some of the rooms in the maze contain nice surprises.



After finding the maze exit, you'll have to battle Octopolus. The only place he's vulnerable is his center eye. The other eight eyes will attack you. Shoot all of them but one. (If you shoot all eight, another eight will appear.) Then concentrate on blasting Octopolus' center eye.

In this area, take the stairway in the upper-left corner.

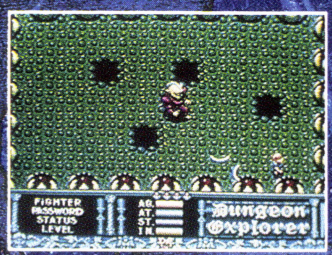
Things will start to cook now. Don't try to shoot out all the monster generators. There are too many of them. Make for the exit quickly.



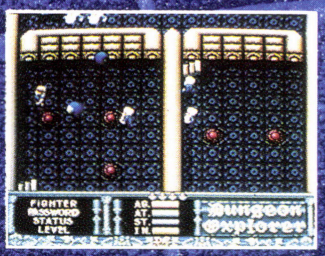
In many dungeons, the exit is in the corner opposite the entrance.

LEVEL 13

Your next job is to find Natas, and get rid of him once and for all. In Axis Castle, take the stairway in the lower left-hand room. You'll wind up here, on Rotoroad.



But first a surprise attack by someone you thought you could trust.



You're getting close to your goal.

Natas sure is a mean-looking sucker, isn't he? Stay near the upper-right corner, and blast the eye in the center of his head. When you beat Natas, you will have won the game. Congratulations!

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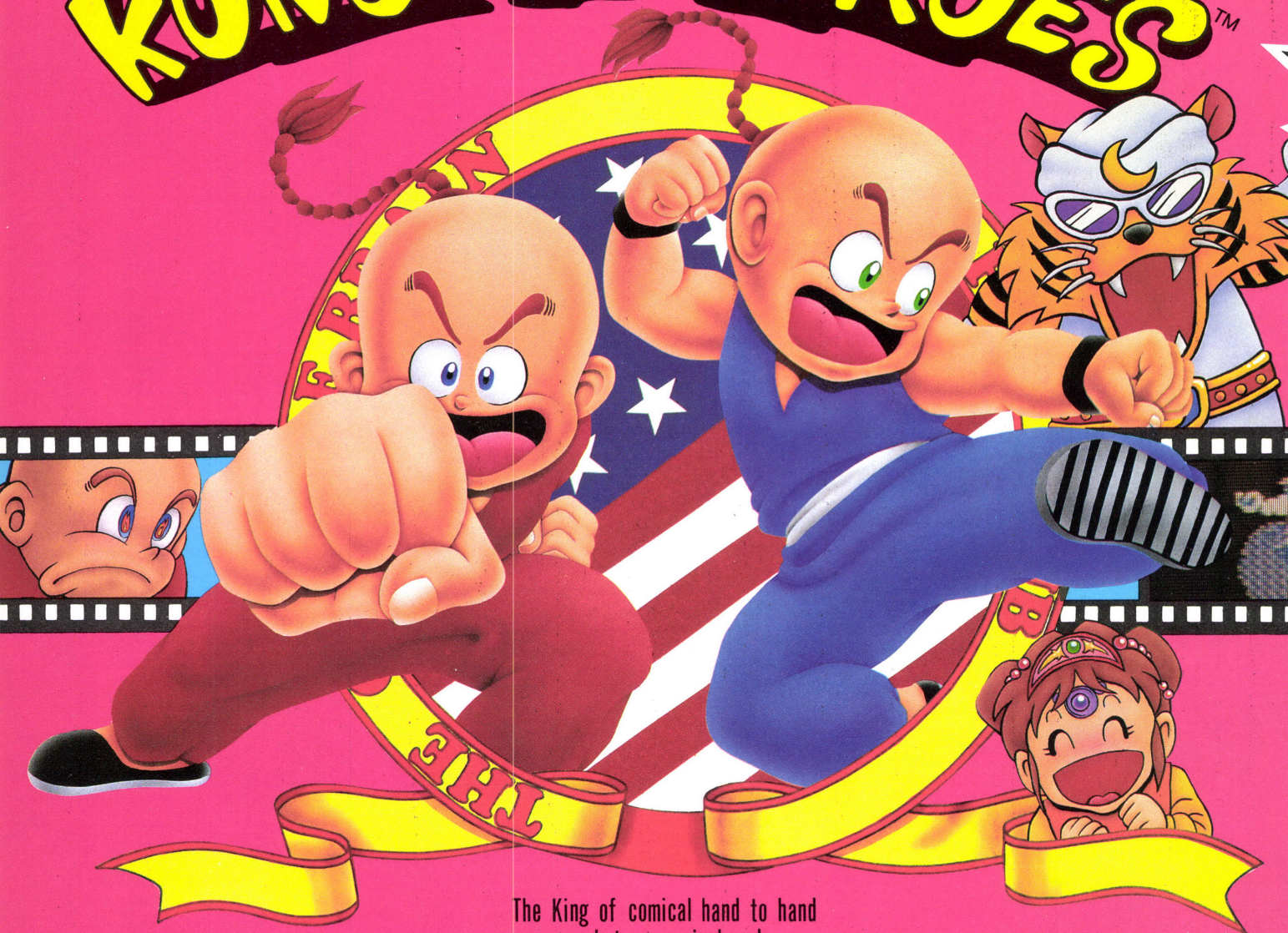
COMICAL KUNG-FU ACTION FOR TWO PLAYERS!

KUNG-FU HEROES™



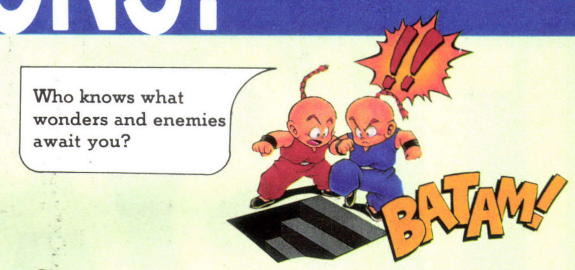
The King of comical hand to hand combat games is here!

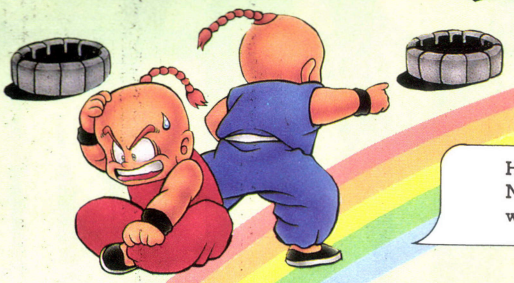
Jacky and Lee, it's up to you to break through the Demon's Castle and rescue Princess Min-Min! The exciting ARCADE HIT "Chinese Hero" is back, powered up for the NES!

COMICAL ACTIONS!

32 stages packed with action and loaded with excitement! The king of comical fighting games is here!

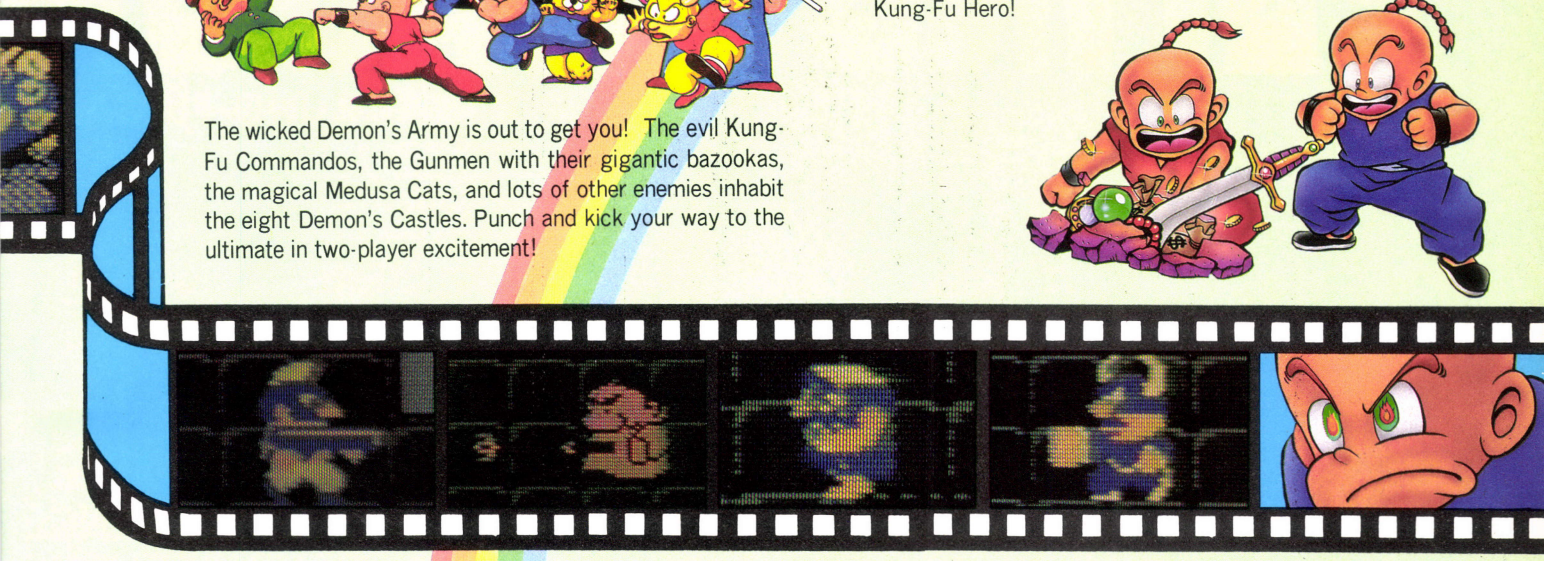
There's Bonus Stages, hidden treasures, Warp Zones, and plenty of other exciting secrets to discover!





The wicked Demon's Army is out to get you! The evil Kung-Fu Commandos, the Gunmen with their gigantic bazookas, the magical Medusa Cats, and lots of other enemies inhabit the eight Demon's Castles. Punch and kick your way to the ultimate in two-player excitement!

Look for the legendary treasures that'll help you defeat the Demon's Army! The Dragon's scales are hard as steel, so you'll need the Legendary Sword! Watch out for the Medusa Beams! Better have the mirror handy! Gather all the treasures, and you'll be an awesome Kung-Fu Hero!



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IT'S A BATTLE CHAMPIONS

FLYING DRAGON™

SUPER REAL KUNG-FU GAME.

AFTER A PROLONGED SILENCE, THE LEGEND RETURNS!

You are Ryuhi, a dedicated student of the ancient art of Kung-Fu. But your wise master has been kidnapped, and with him, the Secret Scrolls, which hold the key to awesome fighting skills. Now, set out to defeat the evil Tusk Soldiers and regain the Scrolls. Your goal: The World Tournament of Contact Sports, where you will seek out the evil warriors of darkness.

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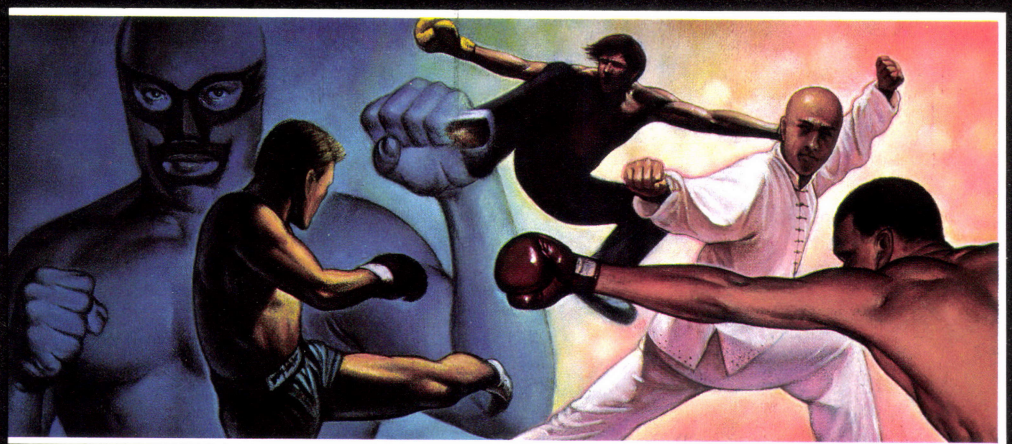
KUNG-FU SO REAL, YOU'LL BE OUT OF BREATH!

It's the first game to include realistic defensive techniques, letting you thrill to the most authentic kung-fu fighting ever created in a videogame.
With an incredible assortment of moves at your command, you'll feel like an expert fighter, thanks to the support of Artificial Intelligence programming. Here are just some of the fantastic moves you'll master.

The excitement is back!



FLYING DRAGON™-the classic hand-to-hand combat game and arcade hit (Shang-Hai Kid®) is back, especially enhanced for the NES!

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CIRCLE #131 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

A fantasy adventure from the Arabian Nights.

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THE MAGIC OF SCHEHERAZADE™

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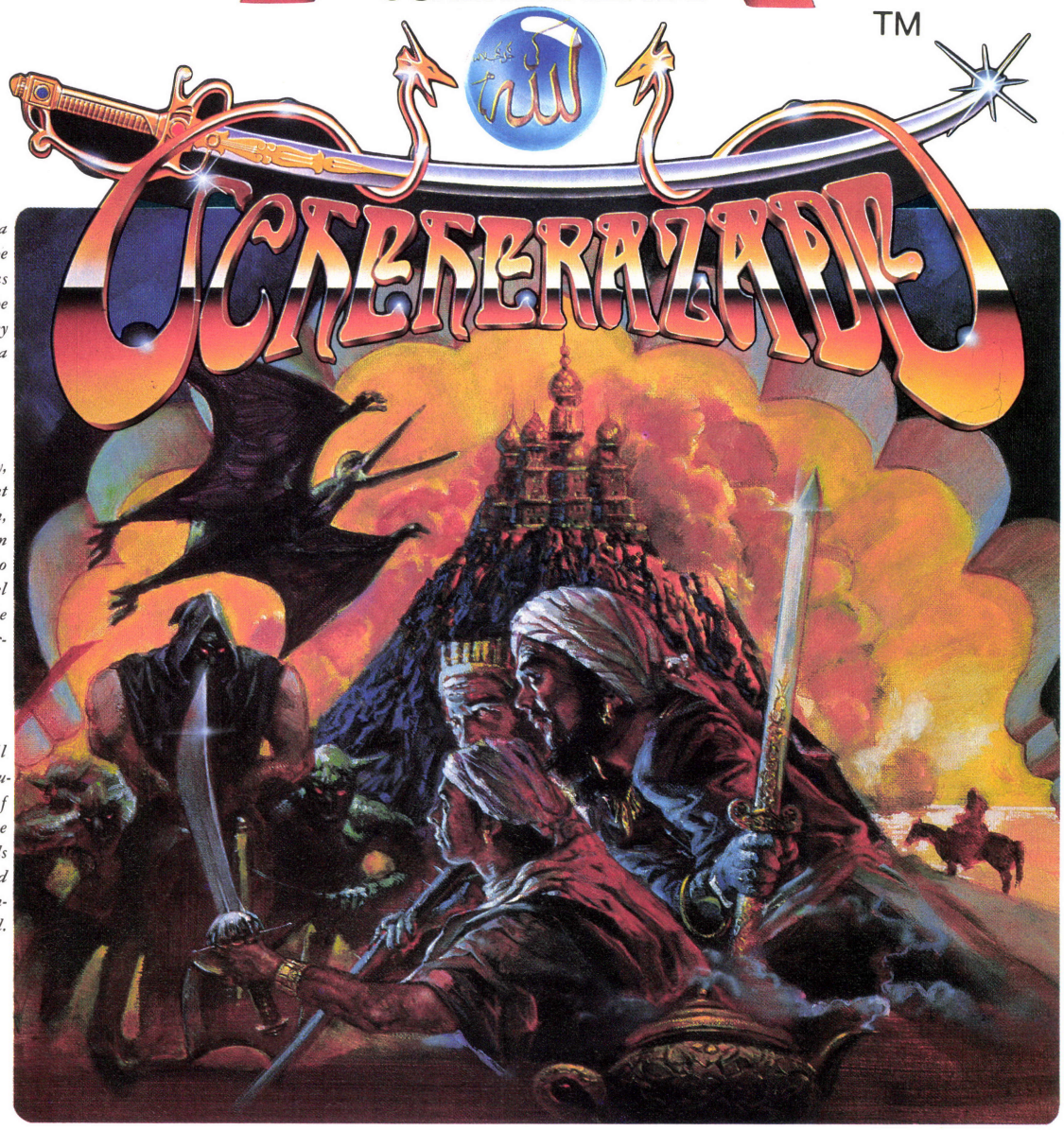


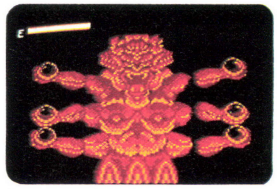
The ancient land of Arabia has fallen into despair. The evil magician Saharon has released his demons from the underground, and now they are about to take over a once-beautiful land.

You have lost your memory, but you are the descendant of the legendary magician, Isfa. Now it is time to return to Arabia. You must fight to defend peace and unravel puzzling mysteries to save the kidnapped princess Scheherazade.

You and your allies will travel throughout the beautiful and mysterious land of Arabia, through the future and the past, and to worlds of water, deserts, forests and flowers. It's a grand adventure waiting to be fulfilled.

Raise your strength with an assortment of swords, magical rods, and special items.

Magical spells come to life on the screen in winds of fire and storms of electricity.



Giant enemies fill the screen and challenge you to battle.

An encounter with the enemy! Create a battle formation with your allies, then fight it out with powerful magic!

FIVE CHAPTERS OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY, OVER 750 DAZZLING SCREENS.

Unprecedented scale, challenging puzz'es, and intense combat, unlike anything else. And a finale full of awe and wonder. The world of Scheherazade is an adventure full of glory.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ENHANCES THE GAME EVEN MORE!

With the support of the Artificial Intelligence programming, even beginning players can enter the magical world of Scheherazade and behold its wonders.

MAGICAL BATTLES WITH ELEVEN ALLIES!

Seek out your trusty companions and invoke an astonishing variety of magical spells. Through the past and the future, you are the hero, battling the sinister forces of evil.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND FROM A WORLD OF FANTASY!

With stunningly beautiful visuals and a musical soundtrack that will captivate your imagination, The Magic of Scheherazade is a gaming experience that'll leave you spellbound!

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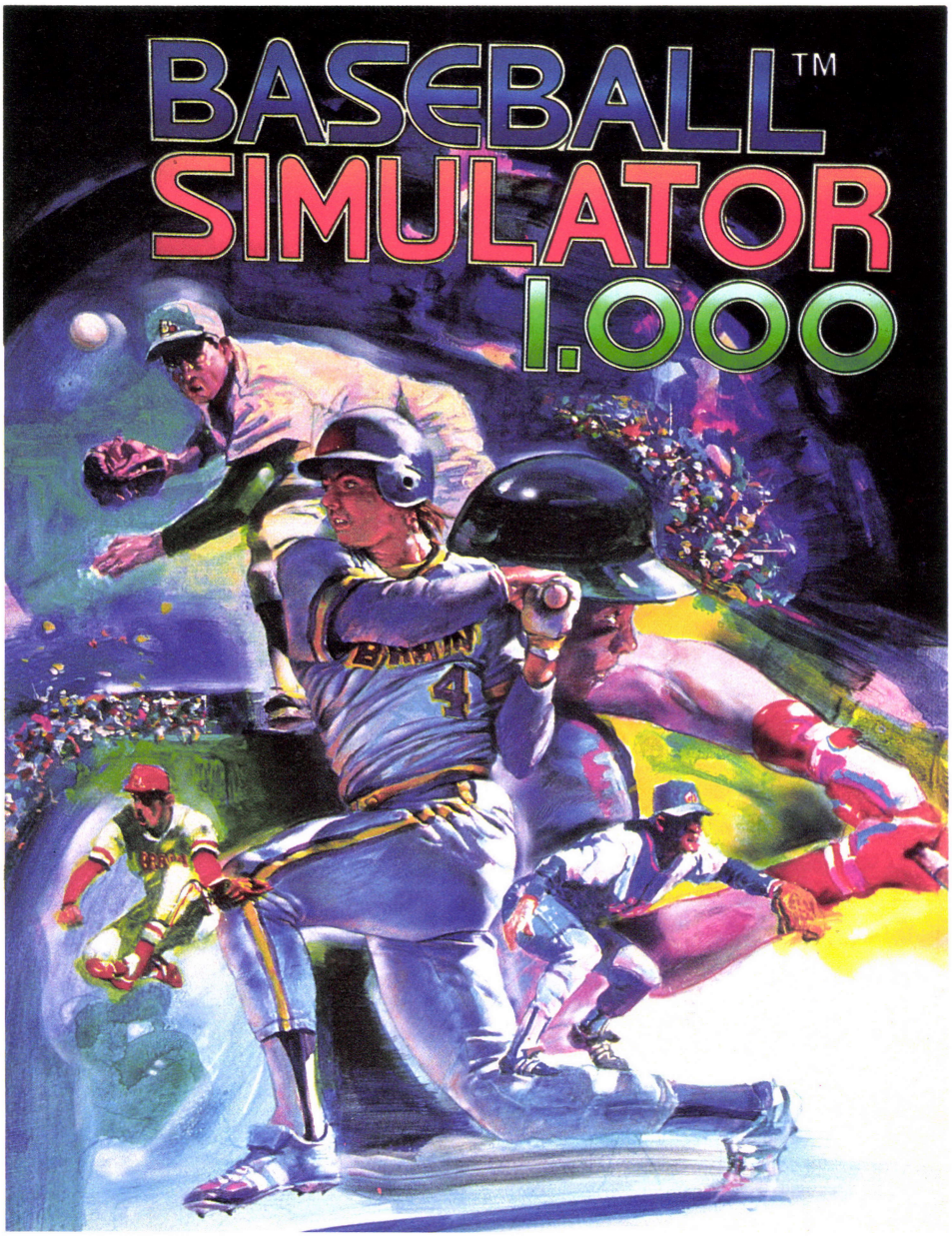
Play the Game Your Way.

Only Baseball Simulator 1.000 lets you play ball any way you want it. It's fully programmable baseball unlike any other game.



Complete Editing

Start with a full team of 12 batters and six pitchers. Then, you decide what kind of team to make. Enter the exact stats you want for a winning team. Use the latest major league stats, make an all-star team, even enter yourself as the star. With six programmable teams, you'll have a whole league of your own.

Intense and Realistic Action

Make a team of quick runners for a fast-paced game. Create players with awesome power for an all-out Home Run Derby. Or give your team the hottest hurlers for an intense pitching game. No matter what kind of game you want to play, it's all possible.

Televised Season Simulation

With the Full-Auto Season, you can play out a continuous season and watch your team from game to game. Even individual players can be tracked with full stats and top-10 rankings. Go for the triple crown!

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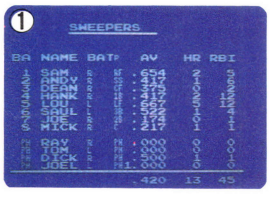
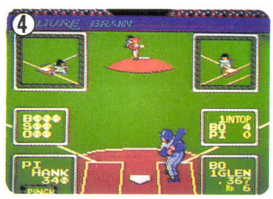
Coming in March!





① FULL EDITING FOR UP TO SIX TEAMS.
Play ball with your favorite major league stars, heroes from the past, fantasy leagues - even enter yourself as the star! Enter team and player names, and all the important stats for your very own team.

② A COMPLETE, SIX-TEAM, 165-GAME PENNANT RACE.
Play a full length season with six teams, for 5, 30, 60, or even 165 games. Follow the teams and players through the season - monitor their stats, even get top-10 rankings in batting and pitching.

④ FULLY AUTOMATIC SIMULATION.
Simulate a full season based on statistics. The season can be played automatically, while you can enjoy following a team through its games. And by editing team and player abilities, it's a full-auto simulation game.

③ THE HILARIOUS FEATURES OF ULTRA PLAY.
Add a whole new dimension of fun to baseball with the wacky Ultra Plays. Throw pitches that disappear or speed up in mid-air. Fight back with hits that explode or knock out the fielders. And catch them by leaping hundreds of feet in the air. With the six teams of the Ultra League, you'll play baseball like it's never been played before!

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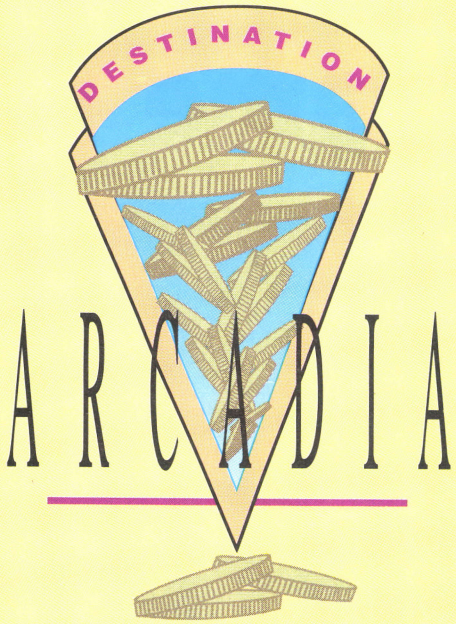
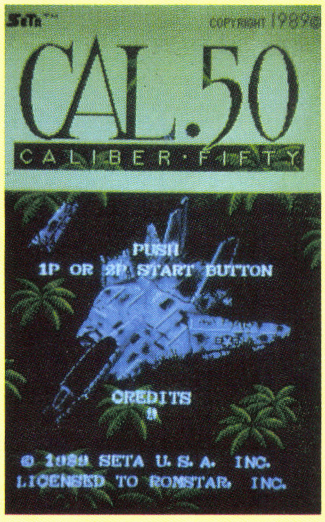


CALIBER FIFTY

BY DONN NAUERT

You've been locked up in a Vietnam prison camp for 20 years, and you can barely remember what the sun looks like, much less another American's face. In a flash, you're out of your cell, thanks to a friendly helicopter's firepower, which blasts the door open. On the run now, you suddenly find yourself racing through the camp fully armed and surrounded by the GIs that have come to rescue you. But just as quickly as it started the mission ends, leaving you to fend for yourself as you try to reach the secondary pick-up point. It's just you against a whole army of angry soldiers whose sole intention is to stop you—and stop you dead.

Caliber-Fifty by Romstar is the latest action adventure game to hit the arcades. It pits you (or you and an optional second player) against countless enemies in a fast-paced shoot-'em-up. Using a rotating joystick (similar to the one found in *Ikari Warriors* by Tradewest), you can fire your weapon in eight directions *and* control your character while advancing through three areas of combat. This allows you to move and fire in different directions—moving forward as you shoot the enemies that sneak up behind you, for example. During the course of play, you'll be able to retrieve precious gunbelts that will give you additional firepower. This could be as simple as a short-range gun to the blockbuster effect of a long-range super rocket or the most powerful of weapons, the Siegal Automatic Flamethrower. You can find these gunbelts in old shipping crates and in the hands of the enemy, who must be killed before they'll release the bonus. Not only do the gunbelts enhance your weaponry but they also add to your point total and act as a shield to protect you from enemy bullets. For this reason, it's important that you pick up as many of these treasures as possible.



***Caliber-Fifty* is a one- or two-player game, and the second player can join in at any time.**

Aside from the various lethal enemies throughout the game, you'll face other dangers, such as the innocent-looking civilians. Unfortunately, they are loaded with explosives and take kamikaze runs at you; if you get too close when they go off, you'll lose a life.

Also, hits from tanks, aircraft and rockets diminish your abilities, dropping you to the next lowest weapon, where regular bullets cause bodily damage.

The Game's Layout

Each area of the game is then broken down into three sections. The backdrop for these sections vary from an enemy base camp and a war-ravaged village to a river that winds deep into the jungle. You won't find just the enemy in these various locations; you'll also find your pathway cluttered with oxen, pigs and chickens grazing along the countryside. Similarly, in the river you'll find turtles swimming back and forth between the shores. This attention to added graphic detail makes *Caliber-Fifty* that much more enjoyable, giving you something else to concentrate on beside the nonstop blastathon taking place around you. (Although neither of these targets are worth any points, try shooting the chickens and the turtles to see what happens.)

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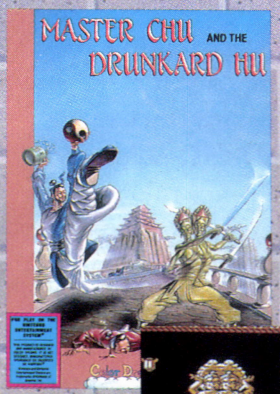

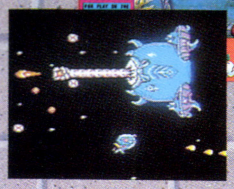

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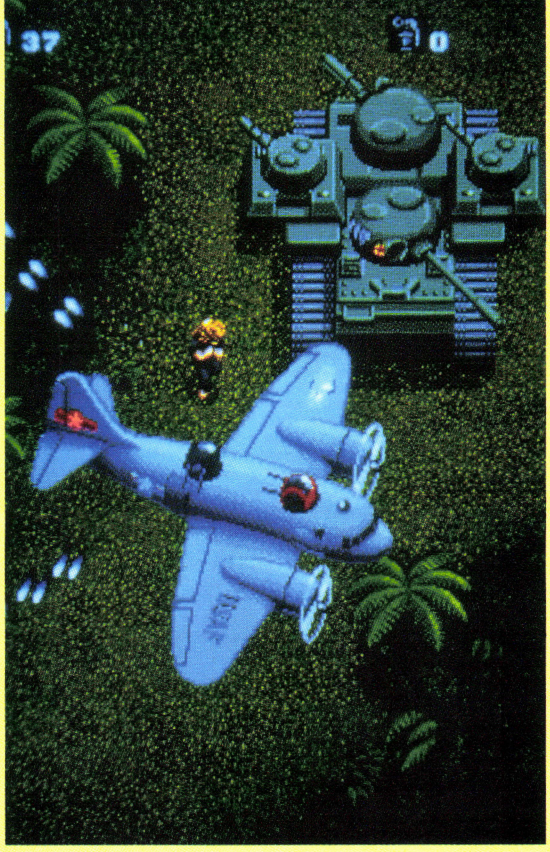

In the first area you'll leave the prison camp in search of a secret underground tunnel. Along the way you will notice an airplane. Unlike most games that litter the screen with unusable items, you can get inside this plane and fly around for a short period of time, using the advanced firepower and speed to scout your surroundings and dispatch some enemy soldiers. Also, this will help you to get past the large tank and helicopter that stand in your way.

Once through this section you're ready to enter the river. Be careful here because soldiers are situated high up on the cliffs around the water, often just out of view—though not out of range of striking you with bullets. Waiting for you on the other side are a number of enemy tanks and booby-trap pits that are likely to surprise you.

(*Strategy tip:* As you eventually reach and enter the underground tunnel, turn the joystick so that you are firing up and to the left; when you reappear, pull down and to the right. A new enemy carrying a flamethrower is introduced, and if the above is not done correctly it could spell instant death for your on-screen character.)

The underground tunnel is similar to the river in that you have cliffs rising above you—again, with a full complement of enemies perched up on top. Along with your newfound friends, the flamethrowers, you will also encounter more bad guys toting bazookas, as well as heavily armed tanks and helicopters that make your travels more complicated. What makes this area different is that as you enter each section you'll find a large number of enemy troops ready to ambush you.

You've been caught, so now it's off to prison—this time.

At the end of this long tunnel is a single room. Here you will find three gigantic monkeys that hurl stone objects at you. (I suggest using the long-range rockets rather than the flamethrower for this particular confrontation. The flamethrower's short range will require you to stand much closer to these dangerous animals.) As soon as you enter, immediately deal with the far right monkey first. Since they throw the objects in an "S" curve, try standing to the left of the monkey's head while staying at the bottom of the screen. Repeat this until all three monkeys have been defeated. I also suggest avoiding the bonus items that appear; if you attempt to pick them up, the remaining monkeys will have a clear shot at you.

A jungle path that takes you through a deserted village, past old ruins and into the enemy headquarters provides the setting for the final area of the game. With a seemingly endless supply of enemy soldiers, tanks and aircraft, you must now maneuver your on-screen counterpart through landmines and around a runaway tractor. This serves as one of the toughest stages you'll have to deal with. Your final destination, the enemy camp, is where you will find the second rescue chopper waiting for you.

(*Strategy tip*: The best method for getting rid of the tractor is to enter the section from the left while moving clockwise, shooting and throwing as many grenades as possible.)

Game Summary

The overall game play of *Caliber-Fifty* is average, featuring a common theme that has been used before. On the other hand, the animation and music contained in this war game are excellent. The graphics were designed with flexibility. For instance, I like the way the oxen are animated—they actually reach down to grab their food—and how the enemies fall to the ground in different positions after being shot. Add the screaming digitized guitar to the background music and you have a game that looks as though it took a lot of time and effort to make. I just wish it were a little less intense. At times there are simply too many enemies on the screen, which creates too many no-win situations.

The length of the game could have been longer because just as quickly as the game—and your valiant mission—starts, it ends, leaving you hungry for another tour of duty.

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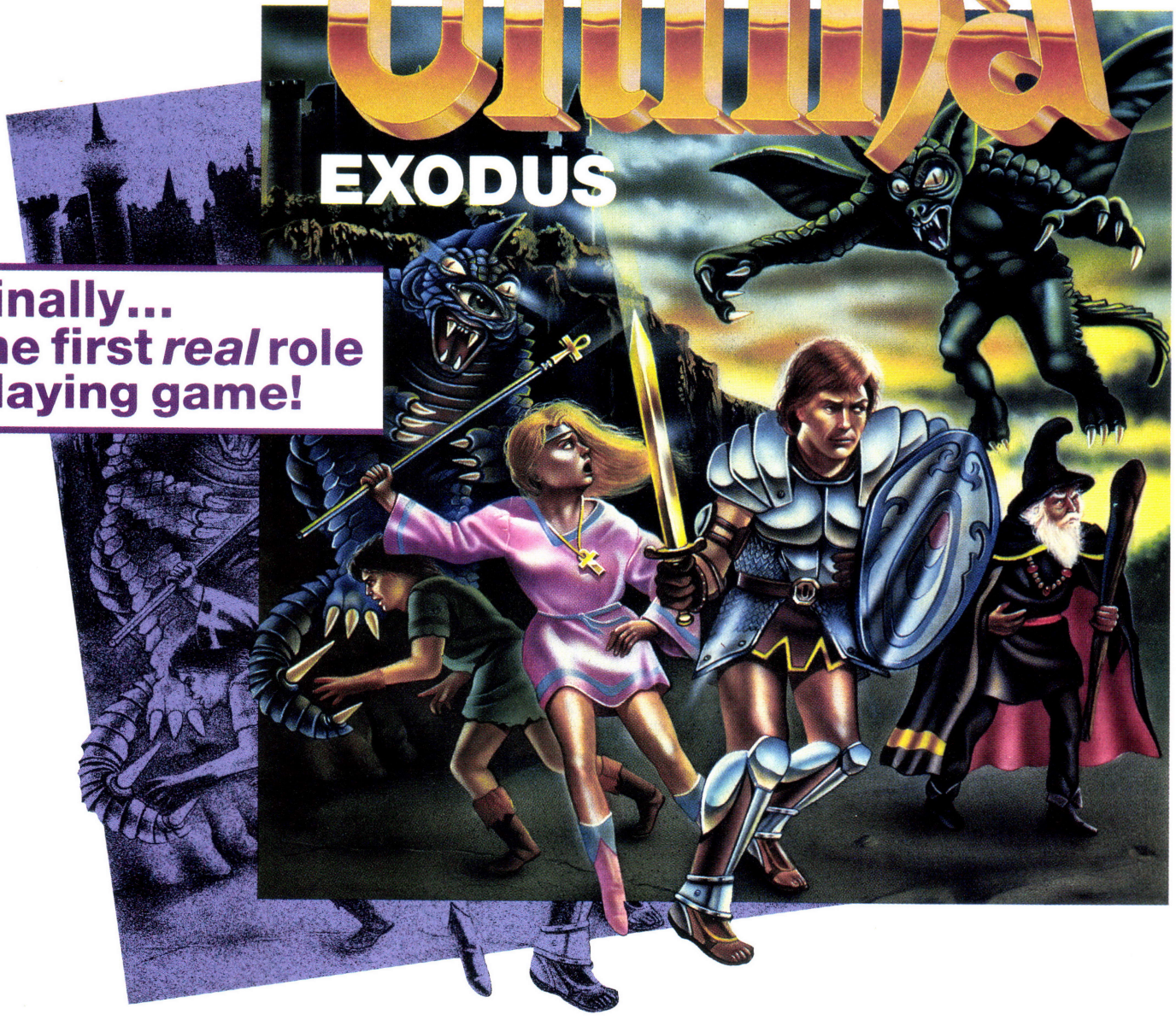

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Play It Again Sam:

SEQUELS

BY JOYCE WORLEY

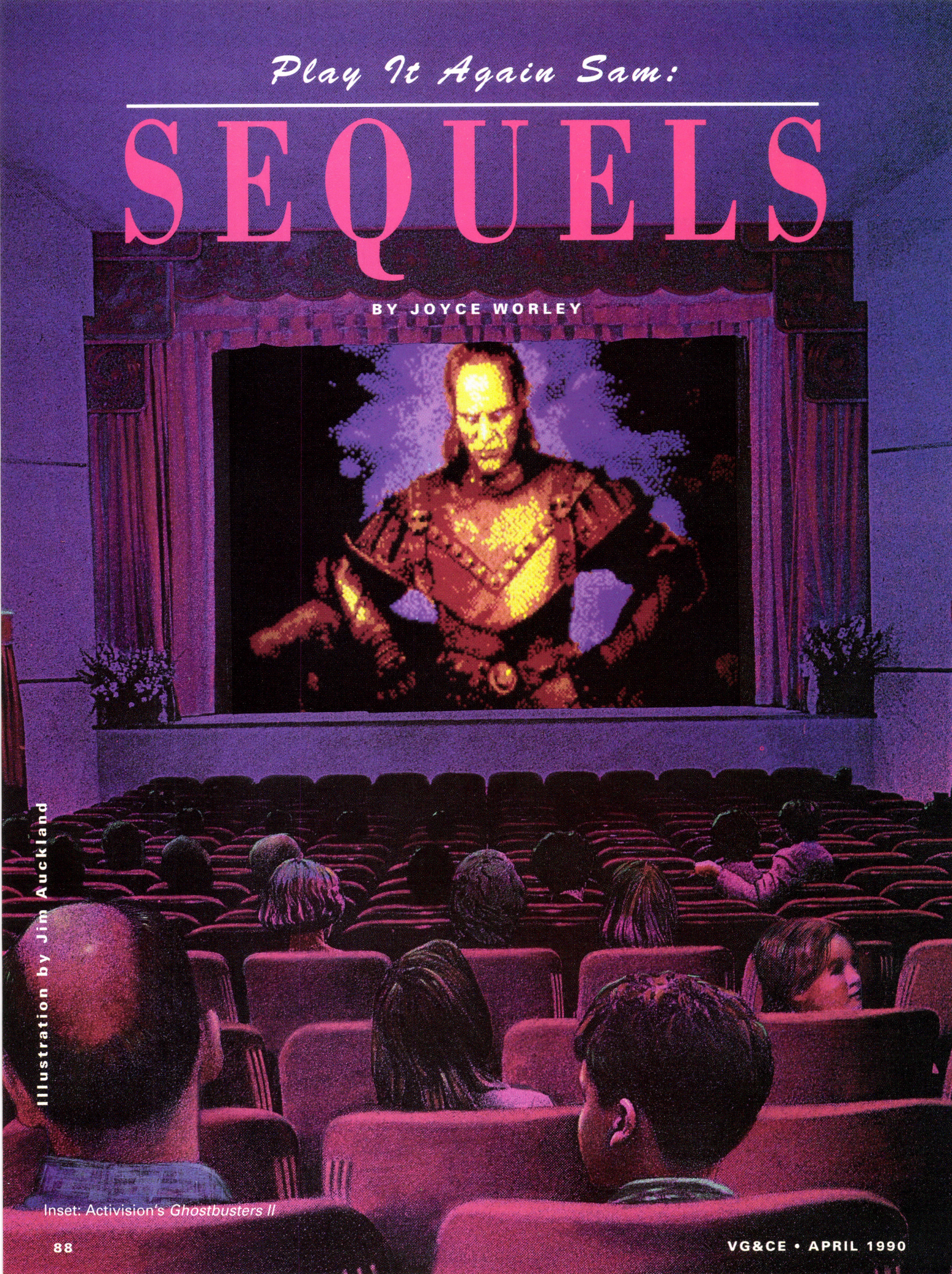
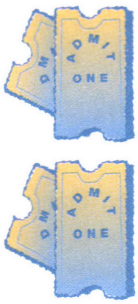


Illustration by Jim Auckland

Inset: Activision's *Ghostbusters II*

A trip through a software store calls for a refresher course in roman numerals. Seems like the number of brand new titles is almost matched by the out–pouring of sequels. In the gaming industry, as with movies and books, there's nothing so popular as a sure thing. Many publishers look at sales figures and decide a rerun is in order.



Actually, it isn't all cynicism and commerce. Art and fun are the motivators in decisions to issue sequel titles in the entertainment software field, where most (well, at least many) software honchos are gamers themselves.

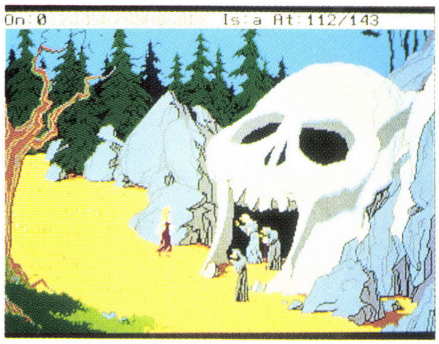
In most cases sequels have enough in common with the original game that it's easy to decide whether or not to buy one. The quality is almost always at least as good as the original title and frequently better. Usually improved play systems, fancier design or enhanced audio tracks bring the newer programs up-to-date.

There really aren't very many down sides to sequelitis. Plot lines may begin to seem cut-and-dried after too many stories cast in the same mold, but usually there are enough differences between the end products that this doesn't occur. One might complain that talented artists and writers on the projects could expand their creativity more readily if they were not bound by format; yet these creators seem to be doing a very good job as it is. And certainly a company that devotes *all* of its R&D dollars to creating sequels is not doing spade work on the frontiers of computer gaming art; but few companies would be so foolish as to devote their *entire* effort only to retreads.

IT'S A MATTER OF CHARACTER

It takes more than just a good sales record to inspire a repeat performance. Accolade's Al Miller explained some of the whys and wherefores of sequel publishing. "Sequels are a good idea when the sequel presents an opportunity to add a great deal of power to the original game. They're a bad idea when they're done just to capitalize on the success of the original.

"The other situation where it's frequently desirable to do a sequel is if you've created a character. Our first role-playing game [*The Third Courier*, Apple IIGS and IBM PC] features a character called Moondancer, a contemporary spy whose first scenario is an adventure set in East Berlin. This type of [continuing] character frequently changes attributes during the course of the game, and sequels let you take this [changed] character into a new game. The character eventually becomes a part of yourself."



Sierra On-Line's *Kings Quest IV: The Perils of Rosella*

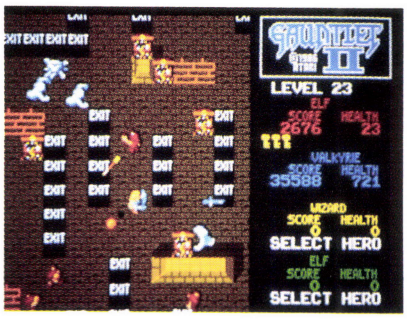
John Williams, speaking on behalf of Sierra On-Line, agreed. "The meat of a good sequel is a good main character. We hope that our characters get to be better known with every exposure."

Williams explained that Sierra, perhaps the one company most heavily committed to publishing sequels, views the characters as the continuity factor between games. "It compares with the early days of the movies. For a studio to be famous was one thing, but to have someone like a Charlie Chaplin, a very well-known character, is what's really great. It's good to have stars you can depend on. We are developing these characters so that, just like actors, people will want to see them in other situations."

John discussed the way the folks at Sierra look at their characters when considering sequels. "Sequels are not so much a continuation of the story but a continuation of the actor. We've talked a lot about letting these characters mix and interact; maybe not meet in a sequel, but putting the actors back into action."

He went on to talk about an obvious exception, a case where the characters and stories are definitely linked by more than the on-screen actors. "Of course, *Kings Quest* will continue to be sequel oriented, since it centers on one family: King Graham, his son and daughter and the history of their kingdom."

In fact, *Kings Quest IV: The Perils of Rosella* takes the history of the Graham family another step (although it is not necessary to play the first three adventures to enjoy this one.) It stars Sierra's first female lead character, and the story involves her quest for a cure for her dying father.



Mindscape's *Gauntlet II*

SOMETIMES THE PLAY'S THE THING

Some sequels result because of the popularity of the original game's play mechanic, rather than because of a charismatic disk star. One such case in point is Mindscape's *Pole Position II*. The original Atari coin-op was a megahit, perhaps the most popular driving game of all time. This new version features improved graphics and terrain to enhance the driving classic, as players vie with other vehicles in a

cross-country race that is remarkably similar to the first version of this game.

Mindscape's *Gauntlet* also inspired a second look. Players' appreciation of the program had little to do with a superstar character; it was the excellent reception enjoyed by the original game that inspired *Gauntlet II*.

Gauntlet II employs the side and overhead perspective seen in the original. While physical objects (the dungeon and all objects within it) are seen from a top-down view, all characters are viewed from a side perspective. However, the newer version brings on some changes. The original *Gauntlet* tended toward hacking and slashing, but the sequel introduces spells, objects and puzzles. As in the original, a team of Warrior, Wizard, Elf and Valkyrie enter the dungeon to conquer dangers and win treasures.

Sierra On-Line's *Leisure Suit Larry 3: Passionate Patti in Pursuit of the Pulsating Pectorals*

The characters have well-defined differences. Thor the Warrior is resilient and powerful, with an awesome battle-ax, but he's somewhat plodding and not much use at magic. Merlin the Wizard has no armor nor weapon with which to destroy the various monsters, but his magic and fireballs are effective. Questor the Elf has a talent for magic, but his shot power is poor and his dagger ineffective in hand-to-hand battle. Thyra the Valkyrie has the strongest armor and sword but poor shot power and moderate magical abilities. The graphics are an upgrade of the excellent original, as is the sound: a digitized voice welcomes each character at the start of the game, warns each when strength is waning and announces when a character picks up a special charm or amulet.

A GOOD IDEA LIVES ON

Other sequels are based more on an idea than on any particular play mechanic or character, as is the case with the theme of space travel, which is echoed in the well-known *Universe* series. *Universe III*, by Omnitrend, features a diplomatic mission to reestablish ties with a colony world. The player, as the starship captain, faces saboteurs and hostility from the locals, as he explores each area and solves puzzles. The main screens show objects and characters in profile and views of each of the four complexes. Scrolling is smooth as the player investigates each area. The easy-to-use system of icons is definitely the most exciting innovation in *Universe III*. A rosette of on-screen arrows directs character movement within each area. Similarly, icons permit the player to pick up, drop and even use some objects, check inventory, move between levels and consult the menu of verbs without resorting to the keyboard.

Mindscape's *Pole Position II*

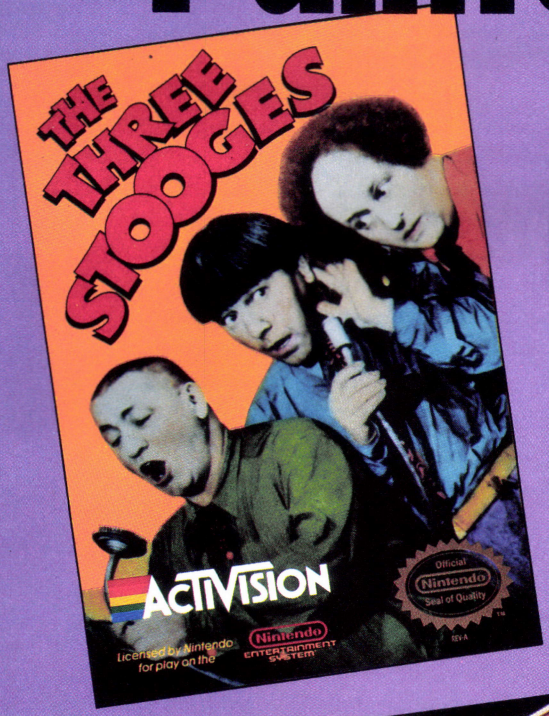
Over the course of several years the *Carmen Sandiego* series has proven to be the most successful blend yet of entertainment and education. The latest entry, *Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* (Brøderbund) lives up to the high standards set by its forebearers. In it Carmen and her gang (made famous in *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?*, *Where in America Is Carmen Sandiego?* and *Where in Europe Is Carmen Sandiego?*) are pilfering rare objects and escaping into *time;* more specifically, the past. The user has access to the Chronoskimmer, a futuristic invention that is all the gamer needs to locate Carmen somewhere between the years 400 A.D. and the 1950s.

Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego? implements many of the protocols and conventions established in the previous *Carmen* games. Playing the game requires only a cursory look at the instructions, since everything the user needs is displayed on the screen through the interface of the Chronoskimmer. If the user wants to jump through time, click on the Time Leap button. Once in a new location the Search button allows the player to interrogate witnesses or check out the crime scene for clues. The Chronoskimmer screens feature numerous attractive visuals, devoted mostly to scenic depictions of the different locales visited by the player/detective. *Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* includes over 1200 clues, 12 countries, historic personalities, objects and events and 15 new Carmen henchpeople to chase through 1,500 years of history. As is usual with this series, a reference volume, *The New American Desk Encyclopedia*, is enclosed with the package.

Might and Magic Book II: Gates to Another World (New World Computing) echoes the game system of its predecessor with excellent graphics and a variety of possible locations and encounters. The world of Cron ranges wide in physical size, but travelers may pass through time into past eras as well. Parties can include eight individuals (including up to six created characters or seven hirelings). Characters are rated by class, race, alignment and sex. The gamer begins play with no forewarning of any specific goal to be reached. Numerous quests, varying in degree of danger, are available. During these quests, over 250 types of monsters may be encountered, ranging from extremely dangerous to helpful.

Adventurers have an arsenal of role-playing-game standards to help them along, as well as some new player aids. The world consists of rivers, forests,

Painfully Funny.



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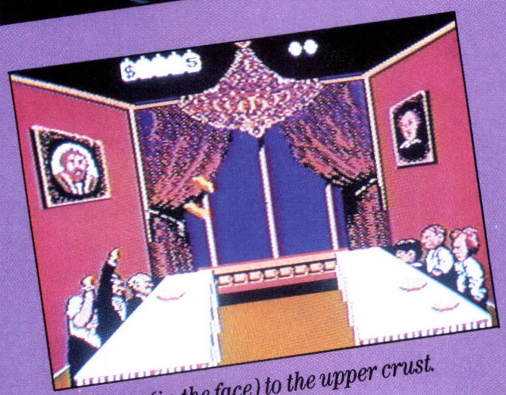

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castles, dungeons and cities spread over 60-plus maps. There are more than 200 items, including weapons, magic items and other objects, and more than 90 spells. The best innovation is an auto-mapping feature that records each area as the player travels through it, releasing the gamer from this onerous chore.

The graphics are quite lovely, featuring views of the world, its people and creatures in a 3-D perspective, with menu options surrounding the oversized window. All the action takes place in the caption text, which gives the results of encounters. The members of the venturing party are never illustrated, since the gamer is looking from their point of view.

Accolade's *The Third Courier*

FROM THE FLICKS

One of the most obvious sources for sequels is movies, where repeat performances command big audiences. Any game plugged into a series of hot films will likely have its own repetitions based on the new movies as they appear.

Kelly Flock, group product manager for Mediagenic, commented on his company's decision to release the *Ghostbusters* sequel. He spoke candidly, "We wanted to play off the benefit of a new movie and roll out another hit. Also, it was a chance to do *Ghostbusters* for the IBM PC, something we hadn't done yet."

Kelly went on to discuss the relationship between the game and the movie. "We wanted to make the story in the game closer to the movie's storyline than in the original *Ghostbusters*. Another goal was to put more strategy into the sequel and give it the flavor and fire of the movie. We wanted to make it more of an experience."

Ghostbusters II returns the team to New York City, which is suffering through a mystic menace that seems to focus on The Museum of Modern Art. Players drive the Ectomobile, pick up objects and destroy ghosts, using action and special effects borrowed from the movie. These include a painting of Vigo the Carpathian that comes to life and samples of slime collected from a river in the subway to be tested in the laboratory.

The full-screen graphics are clear and colorful, and the entertainment features several mini-games based on scenes in the movie. In the courtroom scene, the ghostbuster must fry the Scoleri Brothers with their proton pack to avoid conviction. Captured Ghostbusters must be rescued from the asylum in a *Crazy Climber*-style game. Other entertainments also come directly from the movie, including the exciting climax, in which the player must steer the Statue of Liberty.

Rambo III (Taito), sends Rambo on a three-stage mission to Afghanistan, where Col. Trautman is prisoner in a guarded fort. The game uses a slightly angled top-down perspective in the first two scenarios. The first phase places Rambo inside, where he must find and rescue Trautman. The second sees Rambo and Trautman racing through the enemy car pool toward a waiting helicopter, priming a series of bombs along the way. Finally, the Americans run for the border in a hijacked battletank, taking on an entire army in the process.

There are a variety of weapons, silencers, infrared goggles and similar fighting aids found along the way. The first and second scenarios display the weapon Rambo is carrying in a small window at the base of the screen.

The third mission puts the player inside the cockpit of the stolen tank, with the distance remaining to the border displayed on the left side of the screen and the status of the player's battletank and the enemy's helicopter gunship shown in the top left and right corners of the cockpit display.

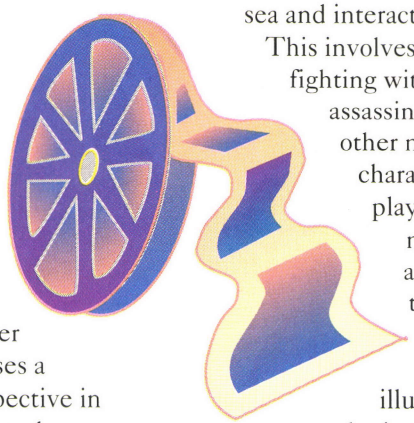
OTHER WORLDS, REVISITED

A good gaming idea is worth a second look. Whether it's a character or a microcosm, a good idea that was well received by the buying audience in one game will most likely have at least a head start toward another.

Origin Systems' classic game of adventure and martial arts, the beautiful *Moebius*, has inspired a sequel. *Windwalker* continues the tradition of full-figured 3-D combat combined with role playing.

In the original game, the player was sent on a mission to save the kingdom by recovering an orb of harmony. In this new adventure, Moebius the Windwalker recruits the player to seek enlightenment and bring forth justice.

Enlightenment doesn't come easy. The student must travel over land and sea and interact with others. This involves a lot of fighting with various assassins, thieves and other menacing characters. The player must master martial-arts moves, use the staff and perform a beautifully illustrated set of acrobatic movements, including hand springs, cartwheels and various leaps and turns.



During this the display window depicts a half-screen view of the location, icons of any character there and a message area. On the right side of the screen are inventory and talk icons and measures of the player's current Karma, Enlightenment, Honor, Body and Spirit status. The combat display gives a screen-wide view of the two combatants, realistically rendered. At the top is the body-status measure, and running across the bottom of the display are movement and combat-maneuver icons.

All this action is laced with a heavy dose of role-playing self-awareness, as

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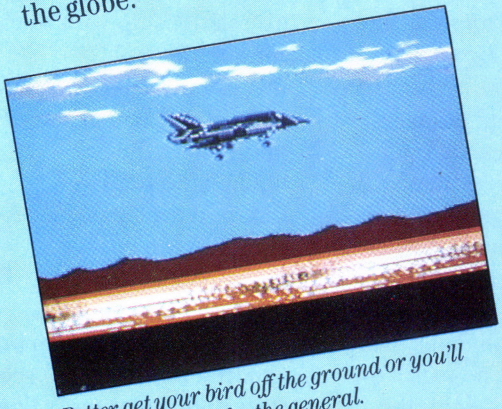
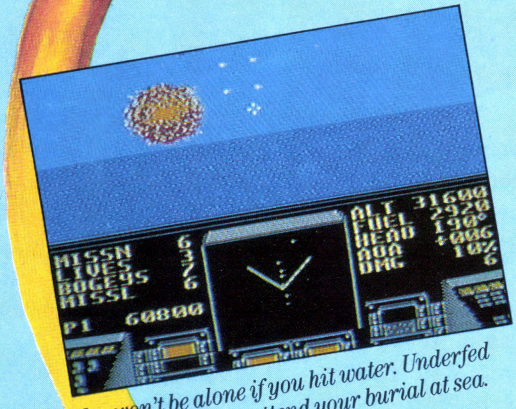
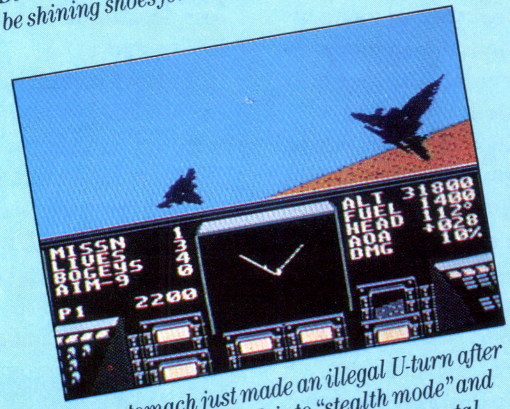


Better get your bird off the ground or you'll be shining shoes for the general.



You won't be alone if you hit water. Underfed sharks are sure to attend your burial at sea.



Your stomach just made an illegal U-turn after that last 6g roll. Kick into "stealth mode" and blast that bogey squadron into scrap metal.

See your local retailer or call 1-800-227-6900 to order.

ACTIVISION

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CIRCLE #139 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

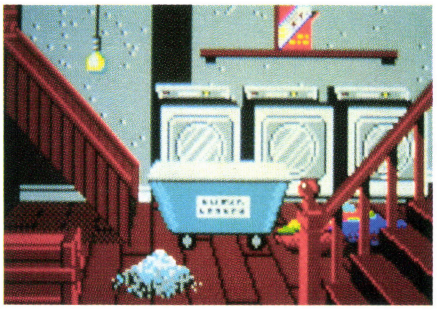
the player works through a thoughtfully prepared story seeking honor, enlightenment and karma. The three disks (on the IBM) come with instructions and a well-written booklet by author Greg Malone with background and story details. Also included is a copy of *I Ching: The Book of Changes*.

A most unusual pairing of sequel games comes from Lucasfilm. *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* is actually two games. *The Graphic Adventure* is an RPG in which gamers play the part of Dr. Indiana Jones, college professor, who gets sucked into an adventure in pre-WWII Europe and a search for the Grail in the Middle East. High resolution 3-D graphics keep the trip interesting, as Indy talks to people, fights, avoids SS guards and travels over the continent in a blimp. A menu of verbs, objects and locations keep the plot moving without typing, and the way the game proceeds depends on the remarks that Indy makes to people he confronts. Although the adventure follows the movie, it contains places, characters and subplots that were cut from the film.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—The Action Game is also based on the movie, but instead takes an arcade approach. Indy searches a cavern in Utah for artifacts then escapes from a gang of grave robbers in a fighting-jumping-running sequence along the top of circus-train cars. The next level takes him to the catacombs beneath Venice, facing fireballs, rats and falling stones. Next he scales the walls of a castle, dodging lightning bolts and falling rocks while using his whip to swing from ledge to ledge.

Both titles feature movie theme music, special sound effects and outstanding graphics based on movie stills. This probably marks a first in the gaming field, where both the original and its sequel are released simultaneously.

Sierra On-Line has just released the sequel to *Manhunter: New York*, the cult classic that casts the player as the detective, cooperating with aliens in the search for subversive humans. The dark and brooding story has now been followed by a second adventure. It is not necessary to know the first game to play *Manhunter 2: San Francisco*, but the action does take up right where the New York adventure ended. The Manhunter leaves New York for the



Mindscape's *Deja Vu II Lost in Las Vegas*

City by the Bay, where he must pursue renegades with maps and portable computer.

Like the original game, this three-disk product features sophisticated graphics, shifting points of view, cinematic closeups and arcade sequences while the player, as Manhunter, goes through changes in his relationship with the alien conquerors.

Leisure Suit Larry 3: Passionate Patti in Pursuit of the Pulsating Pectorals brings back the unlikely hero Larry Laffer, recently divorced and on the prowl. Spicier than the first two titles, this one also uses a trivia test to prevent children from viewing scenes beyond their understanding. (The score on the test determines how much of the game is revealed.)

Larry 3 introduces a variation on the already successful system: It is a role-changing game. Players start the action as Larry but switch to Patti later in the game in this adventure that leads through an island paradise into the jungle, in Larry's pursuit of pretty girls and Patti's search for the perfect man. The entire game is sparked by gorgeous graphics and a sound track that would rival many movies.

Mindscape's *Deja Vu*, by Icom Simulations, pioneered a new form of click-and-point adventuring when it first came out. The hard-boiled story let gamers interact with their computers easily with little or no typing. The player is framed for murder and must uncover the truth in order to save his own skin. Now the sequel is ready. *Deja Vu II: Lost in Las Vegas*, also published by Mindscape, features similarly desperate straits. The player has been abducted from his home in Chicago and taken by two thugs to Las Vegas. There are seven days in which to come up with $100,000 ransom, or it's lights out.

One of the most famous games of the past year was *Double Dragon*, which topped the charts first as a coin-op, then a video game and, finally, a home computer game. Now Virgin Mastertronic has released the sequel to that chart burner. *Double Dragon II: The Revenge* involves the further adventures of Billy and Jimmy Lee, and, again, gamers can battle the enemies either competitively or cooperatively. The sequel introduces new weapons and the hurricane kick, as well as some tough opponents. Players have to battle through a factory, over a mountain and into the lair of the Shadow Boss, who has been resurrected after his demise in the original.

AND MORE TO COME

This article doesn't even begin to cover all the sequels currently available. However, it should give you an idea of just how much fun you can have the second time around. If you have a favorite title, watch the shelves of your local software dealer; chances are good you'll see another like it before long.

It seems likely that sequels will continue to head the lists of new releases for some time, representing a significant percentage of entertainment software sales as they do. Fortunately, they often lead the lists for player involvement as well. They carry with them the mute recommendation of the gamers who purchased earlier versions. The roman numerals say, in essence, "Hey, look: My first version was so well received that we decided to do another!"

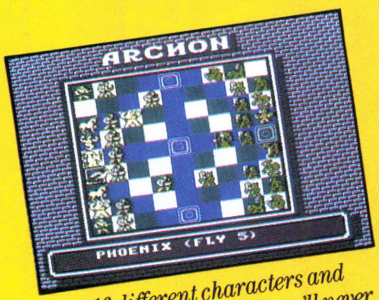
Strategy that Hurts.

A chess board lined with trolls, wizards, knights, and other magical beings. Just another strategy game? Don't count on it. When you challenge a square held by the enemy, the board explodes into a battle-field. Your strategic skills on the game board will determine your fate in a heart-pounding duel to the death.

- **Explosive Battles.** Fire an arrow, cast a lightning bolt, or scorch your opponent with a massive fire ball.
- **Seven Magic Spells.** Imprison the enemy, heal your creature's wounds, reverse the flow of time and more.
- **Summon the Elements.** Air, Water, Fire, and Earth are all at your command.
- **One or Two-Player Action.** Challenge the computer or test your skills against a friend.

If the Goblin catches air with his club, the swift sword of the Knight may steal a leg or two.

The Sorceress has no fear of the massive, boulder-heaving Golem. One of her powerful spells could quickly send him into the next time zone.



With 16 different characters and an ever-changing board, you'll never play the same game twice.

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(continued from page 30)

DRAGON SPIRIT

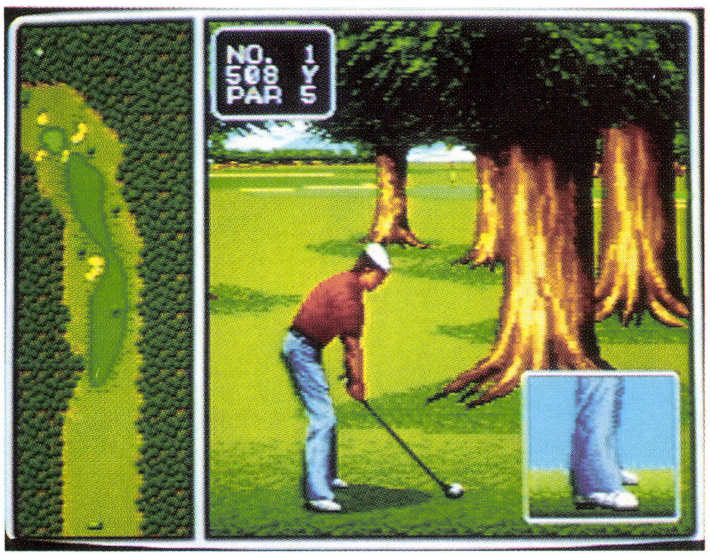
(NEC for the TurboGrafx-16)

Here's yet another continue feature, and it's really a big help. James Grant from Maplewood, Minnesota, says that to restart at the beginning of the last level you were on simply hit 1 and 2 simultaneously from the title screen. (You'll know it worked if you hear a "bing.") Then hit RUN when the game ends, and you're all set.

That ought to be a lifesaver for lots of *Dragon Spirit* fans, James.

ARNOLD PALMER TOURNAMENT GOLF

(Sega for the Genesis)



We're being honest when we say that this egg from Matt Henzel of Saratoga Springs, New York, is one of the strangest we've ever gotten—and it works! Start a game, swing the club about 100 times (it does take some time) until the game ends, wait about 20 seconds, press U, L, D, R, then hit A, and you'll get a demo screen from *Fantasy Zone*! Matt says that if the trick doesn't work you should reenter the controller moves again, but it worked first time for us. Nice discovery, Matt.

STALKING THE MASS MARKET

by Arnie Katz

Writer, editor, lecturer and game designer Arnie Katz knows the field from every perspective. Each month his column takes readers inside the world of video and computer games. This month he examines the mass market for home computer entertainment and the company that has courted it most successfully.

Ask everyone you meet next Friday morning what they did the previous evening, and it's a decent bet that a lot of them watched *Cosby* or *Cheers* on television. Mention *Batman*

while you're with a group of friends, and several are guaranteed to have seen the movie at least once. Want to know whether or not Hulk Hogan won at this year's Wrestlemania? Families in about nine million American homes watched the pay-per-view event and have the answer.

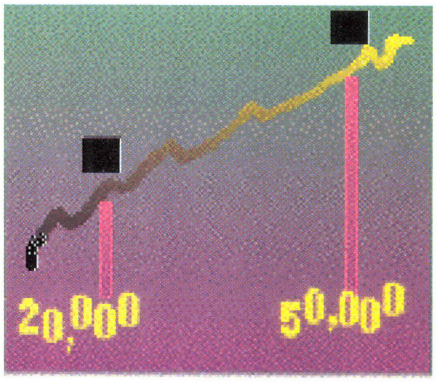
Try a similar opinion poll about the last computer game you bought and you may have to search hard for someone else who has heard of it, much less actually played it. It is an inescapable fact—and a painful one for someone who loves games like I do—that more people attended each of the major college football bowl games on New Year's Day than bought all but the most popular programs.

A successful computer game in 1990 will sell 20,000 to 50,000 copies in the United States. A successful computer game in 1985 sold 20,000 to 50,000

copies. That's not whirlwind progress, especially considering that the 1985 disk sold for a lower retail price.

Like every creative artist, I yearn to entertain the multitudes. It's not only that golden pot of royalty money, either. Ever notice how a stadium packed full of screaming rooters makes the home team seem to play with more spirit? The athletes on the field draw strength from their vociferous supporters in the stands. There's an exhilaration in strutting your stuff in front of a really large audience.

Writers are the same way. There is an ego-inflating confidence that comes from knowing that your book, movie, TV show or whatever is appreciated by millions. That exalted feeling is strictly hearsay in the computer-gaming field. It's missing when the artist caters to a coterie of fans, no matter how knowledgeable they are.



Why don't computer games hit mass-market pay dirt? People in the business are full of reasons. Of course, if anyone really knew the answer, they'd surely change the situation.

Video games are the current scapegoat. People don't buy as many computer games, goes the conventional wisdom, because they are buying cartridges for the Nintendo, Genesis and TurboGrafx-16. That sounds like a good explanation, until you consider the demographics of the two fields. What is the possible connection between a 12-year-old's purchase of a video game and a 30-year-old's decision not to buy a computer game?

If video games disappeared tomorrow (perish the thought!) computer entertainment would certainly experience an increase in sales. But the gain would come from a widening of the market to include some of the youngsters who currently do their gaming on dedicated cartridge systems, not because computer-software publishers suddenly were reaching a greater portion of the adult audience.

It's time to stop blaming video games and take a straight look at the problem. Video games don't prevent computer-entertainment titles from attaining mass popularity. It's the games themselves that keep the hobby small and stagnant. And things aren't going to change much until publishers cut the alibis and address the situation.

The walls of the 50,000-copy ghetto aren't impregnable. There are three ways to break through the barrier:

- Galvanize an unusually high percentage of the existing audience into buying.
- Hook people who own computers and like fun, but don't usually buy computer games.

The most striking example of capturing an interest group that dwarfs computer gaming is flying. It is obvious that the concept of flight fascinates a great number of Americans. *Flight Simulator II* (subLogic

Continued on page 100

Computer Art by Laurie Ferguson

ACE THE GRAND SLAM

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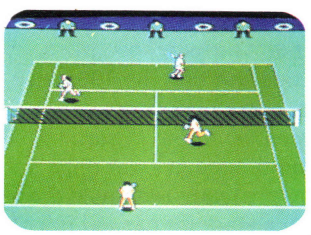

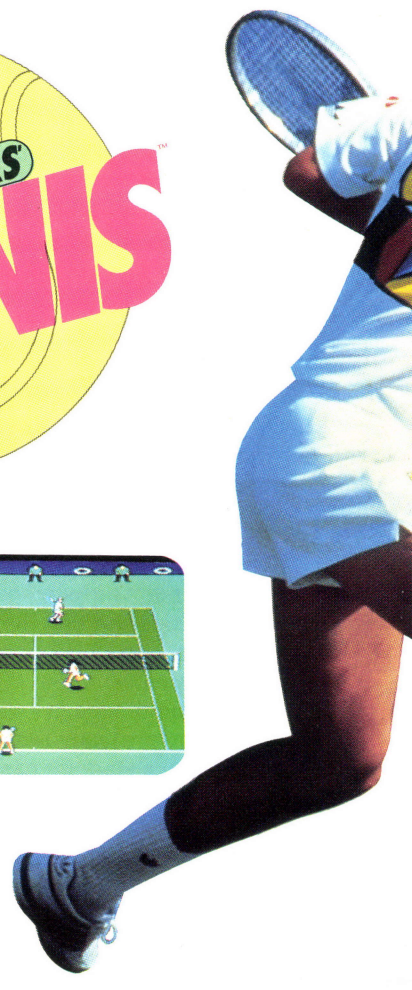

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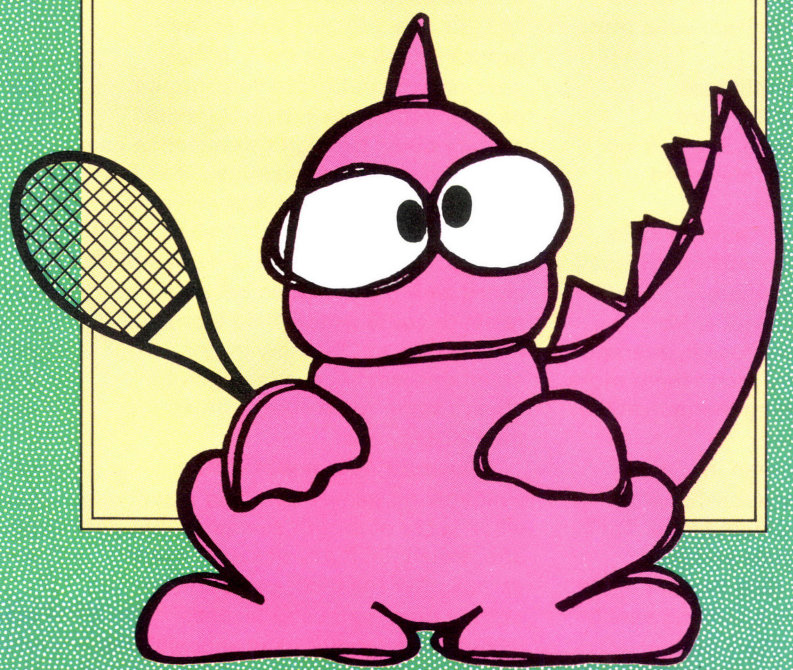
4 FOUR PLAYER GAME

SCORE BIG WITH ASMIK

"Greetings, gamesters. I'm Boomer. You'll see me representing all the exciting games by a new company called Asmik. Asmik, has had popular success in Japan, so I'm sure you'll be seeing a lot of Asmik's great games for your Nintendo Entertainment System.® I'll be appearing in my own game, too. You can help me battle the enemy in a prehistoric adventure for Nintendo's portable GAME BOY.™ So when you want action and adventure remember Asmik, and remember me, Boomer."



Continued from page 97

for all systems) has sold more than a half-million copies while seemingly violating every rule of computer-game development. It has a huge rule book, a dizzying number of controls and no competitive juice, but that didn't keep it from selling about ten times as many copies as the typical hit.

The reason is that *Flight Simulator II* presents an experience a lot of people want to have. Or if they have flown an aircraft in real life, they want to do it more often than the cost of fuel and plane rental allow.

Those who love to soar through electronic skies buy programs that allow them to do so without reference to the rest of the gaming world. *Flight Simulator II* doesn't violate guidelines for good computer games, it completely ignores them. Winged Walter Mittys eagerly read the thickest manuals and memorize the most convoluted control systems to gain access to the simulated experience of piloting an aircraft.

The sustained popularity of role-playing games (RPG) and adventures is an instance of the second route. Millions play non-electronic RPGs like Dungeons & Dragons, Runequest and Traveler. It is not surprising, therefore, that computer RPGs can attract a steady 100,000 to 200,000 customers.

Most computer gamers have some RPG experience, so a good title in this category figures to induce a larger-than-usual percentage of them to buy such products. And if software publishers were doing it right, I believe even more copies would be sold.

There's only one outfit that consistently employs the third alternative: Cinemaware. There is no more envied and misunderstood company in all of home computing—envied because of sales and misunderstood because of the way Cinemaware achieves them.

Rivals should be envious. No company even comes close in average sales-per-title. So why aren't there more Cinemawares exploiting the market? Well, that's where the misunderstandings creep in.

Almost every new publisher sets corporate sights on Cinemaware. They see those six-digit totals and start counting the money they haven't made yet. Then they examine Cinemaware's mode of operation. "We'll out-Cinemaware Cinemaware," they exclaim bravely, "but first we gotta do some product." So the fledgling company orders up a batch of British titles, sells an average of 20,000 units of each (if they are lucky) and takes its place next to all the other publishers wandering in the wilderness.

Publishing the Cinemaware way is more expensive than the prevailing method, which is known as "quick and dirty." That's why most software companies choose to cut development expenses to the bone and spend the bucks on marketing. That is also why 1989 saw a record number of professionally produced, achingly dull games. Marketing is a vital component of the success formula, but it is not a substitute for an arresting theme and rivetting content.

What lessons should the rest of the software field learn from Cinemaware? Bob Jacob's brainchild is hardly perfect, but some of the things it does right would really help many other publishers. Here's a prescription for connecting with the mass market the Cinemaware way:

Join the Cultural Mainstream: Don't let the technical experts dictate game content. They are often quite talented, but sometimes lack broad life experience and the socialization that goes with it. They barricaded themselves in their rooms and learned to crank out code while the rest of us watched movies and TV, played baseball and did all the other "normal" things.

I, for one, am glad that today's programmers made the sacrifice, because we couldn't have computer games without their skill. But their solitary quest for digital knowledge has left them most singularly isolated from America's hopes, fears and desires.

Cinemaware ties every title to popular culture. Its game themes always strike a chord with the audience because they relate to some widely held interest. People look to Cinemaware for entertainment because the games always seem to be about something they already like.

Maximize Audiovisual Effects: Uninvolving games don't get played nor, when word of mouth circulates, bought after the initial flurry of sales. Board games offer the tactic pleasures of rattling dice, cards and tokens.

Computer games can't appeal to the kinesthetic sense, so they must work with other senses. That means sight and hearing. No one labors longer over art, animation, music and sound effects than Cinemaware. Some titles have better action than *Rocket Ranger*, but how many feature grander graphics or more sensational sound? The illustrations create a convincing background that pulls the computerist into the game world, and the stirring music makes every activity seem heroic and important.

Make the Game Accessible to People: No game that requires the user to read a novella before booting will be a megahit. Cinemaware distills subject matter down to essential elements that anyone even slightly familiar with the subject can grasp in moments, without long-winded documentation. *It Came From the Desert* has goals and problems instantly recognizable by anyone who has ever seen a 1950s monster movie.

Stress Play Experience, Not Score: Some kids really get off on how big a number they can put on the game's vanity board. Adults, in general, have little interest in setting records, possibly because their skills make this unlikely. Whatever the reason, most gamers gauge the success of their software purchases by how much fun they had with the product.

Quite a few competitors chastise Cinemaware's games for the lack of challenge in action sequences. "Anyone can play them through after a couple of tries," they scoff, neatly missing the whole point. Of course an ordinary person can play the sequences successfully after a few tries. That's the whole point: The games are not an end in themselves. They communicate the experience of the game in a direct, personal, real-time way. They don't test the ability to twiddle a joystick. There is nothing especially hard about any part of *Defender of the Crown* or *Lords of the Rising Sun*, but those who negotiate all the subcontests derive a satisfying play experience.

These four tenets are the foundation of Cinemaware's outstanding success. Of course, it doesn't hurt to have a few people around the office like John Cutter and Bob Jacob to put them into practice.

The computer-entertainment industry stands at a fork in the road. It can allow video-game manufacturers to capture the entire home electronic-gaming business, or it can fight for the mass market by offering game formats and content that fit in the mainstream.

The VG&CE Annual Games Survey

VOICE YOUR COMPUTER AND VIDEO-GAME CHOICES

It's time for all computer and video gamers to stand up and be counted. VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT is sponsoring its first annual poll to take the pulse of the electronic gaming community at the dawn of a new decade.

Ballots will be tabulated and the results presented in a future issue of the magazine. All individual replies will be held in strict confidence.

Please spend a few minutes to fill out the ballot and send it to VG&CE at: 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107. You may send a photocopy.

Sex: Male Female

Age:
Under 12 12-16
16-25 26-40 Over 40

Family Income: Under $20,000
$20-$39,000 $40-$60,000 Over $60,000

I actively use a video-game machine:
Yes No

I actively play games on a computer:
Yes No

I _____ go to coin-op arcades.
never sometimes often
regularly

I spend _____ hours per week playing electronic games.
under 2 2-5 6-10
more than 10

I spend under PER WEEK on computer and video games.
$2 $2-$5
$6-$10 over $10

Please check ALL hardware you own or plan to buy in the next 12 months.

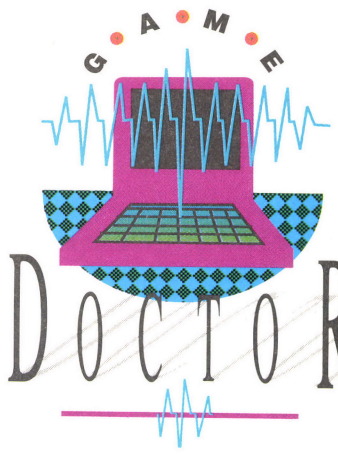
	OWN	PLAN TO BUY
Nintendo NES	_____	_____
Sega Master	_____	_____
Atari 7800	_____	_____
Genesis	_____	_____
TurboGrafx-16	_____	_____
Game Boy	_____	_____
Lynx	_____	_____
Other Video Game	_____	_____
Amiga	_____	_____
Apple IIGS	_____	_____
Atari ST	_____	_____
C-64/128	_____	_____
Macintosh	_____	_____
IBM PC	_____	_____
Other Computer	_____	_____

Please rate the following game SUBJECTS from 1 (not interesting to me) to 10 (very interesting to me):
Science Fiction ____ Martial Arts ____
Fantasy ____ Mystery ____ Monsters ____
Western ____ Military ____ Sports ____

Please rate your interest in these types of electronic games from 1 (not interesting to me) to 10 (very interesting to me):
Video Games ____ Coin-Ops ____
Computer Games ____

My favorite video games are:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My favorite computer games are:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Answers From the PC Practitioner!

by The Game Doctor

There's one question that turns up on my cluttered desk more often than all the other queries combined. The problem is, it's also just about the toughest one to answer. The question usually goes something along these lines:

"I own a [name of video-game system/computer] and my friend owns a [name of different video-game system/computer]. My stupid friend insists his [video game/computer] is better than mine. I say he's a jerk. What do you say? Which is better?"

The other variation on this is:

"I am looking to buy a [video-game system/computer]. What's the dope, Doc? I'm not made of money, and I don't want to get burned so I'm turning to you. What do I buy?"

I have empirical evidence that there is no "better" computer or video game. Every month, I receive dozens of letters from people who think the NES blows away the SMS as a game system, while another group of letter writers seriously wonders why an "obviously superior" video-game console like the SMS hasn't wiped the NES off the map. Then there are the Atari ST boosters (hell hath no fury like these folks, believe me!), the Amiga partisans, Apple worshippers, C-64 mavens, Mac devotees and groups representing every imaginable computer and video-game constituency (this very column has an extremely intelligent letter praising the virtues of the Tandy Color Computer 3, for example).

Asking which is the best computer or video-game system is a lot like writing to *Guitar Player* magazine and asking what the best electric guitar or amplifier is. The answer there would be: It depends what you're looking for.

That's the answer here, too.

Nonetheless, we get so many questions along these lines that I'm going to run a couple of them this time out and see if we can't get a little more specific. First off, a couple of computer consumer queries.

question

My parents were thinking about buying a computer. After looking through VG&CE I thought the Amiga looked good, but then I had a friend tell me that it wasn't that good, and I shouldn't get it. In your opinion, what is the best computer to buy today?

—Tim Chadez
Homedale, Idaho

answer

Okay, Tim, I've danced around this question long enough. I presume if you're reading VG&CE, you are a game enthusiast. That leaves only two real choices: Amiga or IBM PC. Here are the pluses and minuses, in the Doc's book, on both computers:

Amiga pluses: state-of-the-art, super sound and graphics; uses standard Atari-style joystick; lots of game software. With a big Commodore advertising push this past Christmas, the Amiga may finally be ready to takes its place as a major player. It is also very reasonably priced.

Amiga minuses: the Amiga desktop and operating systems are somewhat opaque; the operations are not as streamlined and user-friendly as the Macintosh or Atari ST (though far easier to use than a typical IBM PC machine). Also, while it may become a serious contender in the U.S. computer sweepstakes, the Amiga has not yet reached that status. We're keeping our fingers crossed.

IBM PC Pluses: Easy. Virtually every piece of software published in this country is made available in an IBM PC format. If only one version of a new game is produced, it is almost certain to be IBM PC. Also, these computers can be made into acceptable game-playing machines if the user adds an EGA or VGA monitor, a sound board and a joystick card.

The IBM PC is a dependable computer that can be easily repaired if/when it malfunctions. In short: Parts are cheap and software is plentiful.

IBM PC Minuses: The IBM PC system is a nightmare. The Doc has spoken with experienced programmers who have thrown up their hands in frustration after a few hours exposed to these puppies. Documentation is shockingly poor, especially when one considers how much of it there is. IBM PC machines invariably include tons of documentation, the very sight of which makes most users weak in the knees. As Chris Crawford noted in a recent issue of his newsletter, when he purchased a mouse controller for his new IBM PC computer, it came with two large volumes of documentation!

Also, while you can improve sound and graphics to acceptable levels, those peripherals must be purchased separately. On the other hand, IBM PC

Key Ingredients for a World Class Golf Experience . . .

- Superior EGA Graphics
- RealSound, Digitized Sound Technology
- So close to the actual experience you'll forget it's a game

"Simply Amazing . . ."
—Compute

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add-ons are generally quite inexpensive (with the exception of sound boards, which can be steep in price).

Despite the so-called compatibility that exists within the IBM PC universe, these systems are often very different. But games must be produced for a single standard. Therefore, if your computer runs at less than 12 MHz, it will probably run too slowly, while if it runs at a higher speed, the action is likely to be too fast.

Another result of this non-compatibility within the IBM PC universe is that very few games are playable out of the box. Most require elaborate installation procedures and blank, formatted disks onto which the original programs must be loaded. This adds an invisible cost onto these software purchases since the user must provide an equal number of blank disks for every game disk they buy (and many IBM PC games consist of five or more 5 1/4" disks).

Finally, the type of game IBM PC computers have the most trouble with are action and arcade-style contests. If such games are among your favorites, this may not be the system for you.

Obviously, I feel the IBM PC computers have many drawbacks as entertainment machines. On the other hand, if you purchase a large number of games, you may find the wider selection preferable. If I were buying a computer now, however, I'd probably go with an Amiga.

Now, lest the ST commandos put a bounty on my head, let me add that the Atari ST is a great game-playing computer, but the majority of software published for it is European. Many of the best games from the top American publishers are not available in ST format. Moreover, the Doc does not believe it is possible that the ST will be a viable computer a year from now, whereas the Amiga looks like it will.

Now here's the second choice:

question

I have been having trouble explaining to my mom how much better the C-64 is than an Apple IIc or IIe. So I need your help. Which is better? Which is cheaper? Please prove me right or wrong.

—Tony Verslings
Lynn Center, Illinois

answer

Last time I looked, the C-64 was cheaper than either of the Apple systems you mention. Also, in the race toward oblivion, the C-64 seems to be holding out much better than the Apple IIs. While several new C-64 games turn up in my office every month, Apple IIc and IIe games have all but disappeared. I wouldn't expect either computer to have much longevity in the current marketplace, but if it's one or the other, I'm with you, Tony.

NEWS, NOTES & QUICKIES:

• I hate to say this, but my Vectrex source has temporarily been out of touch. But keep the faith, loyal Vectrexians, I've still got those SASEs and will mail, and in this column I'll print the information as to the availability of Vectrex software as soon as it arrives.

• Terry Griffith has a tip for James and Rhea Meurer, who had problems with the *V-Max* quick-load program on their C-64 software: "The problem described about [being unable to boot] programs with *V-Max* protection is common with older drives like the VIC-1541. *V-Max* checks the drive ROM for information that is not there in the older ROM chips. The options are to upgrade the ROM chip or purchase a new drive." Thanks, Terry.

• Leward Bourda Jr. writes to thank us and let us know that the game he was trying to think of was indeed Sega's *Monster Bash*, as coin-op specialist Roger Sharpe suggested several issues back.

• Leo-Paul Chiasson from the Great White North wants to know why his buddy's Amiga version of *Earl Weaver Baseball* has fantastic speech and sound effects, while his IBM PC version offers only "bleeps and bloops." The answer lies in the hardware: The Amiga possesses state-of-the-art audio capabilities, whereas the IBM PC featured extremely primitive sound-generating technology (not to mention a tiny on-board speaker). You can improve your IBM PC's sound by adding an Ad-Lib or Roland sound board, but it will never sound as good as an Amiga, sorry.

Continued on next page

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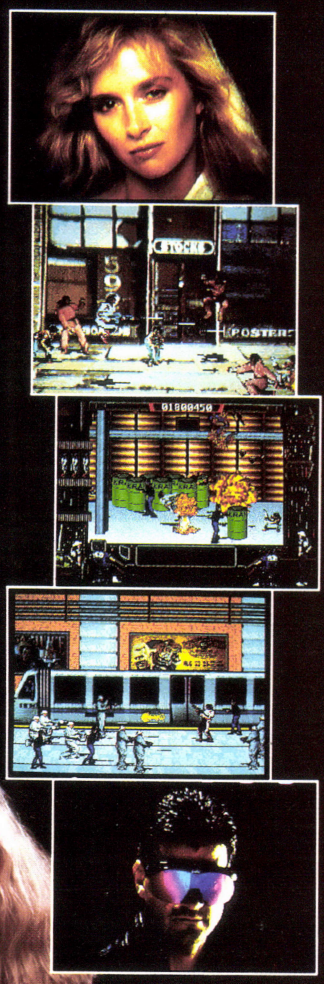

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We've also gotten tons and tons of Qs demanding that we choose between the Genesis and TurboGrafx-16 as the top 16-bit video-game system. This is a very difficult point in time to make that kind of decision. During the early months of the NES vs. SMS war, it was difficult to pick a winner. Neither company had really settled into an identifiable groove nor established the type of software library it would have available. If you look at the early game catalogs for the two systems, they were almost indistinguishable.

The Doc has heard from readers who own both systems, like L.A. radio personality and longtime game-fan William Simpson. Here's his diagnosis (taken from a much longer letter I wish I had room to reprint in full):

"As for the new systems, I have invested in both the NEC TurboGrafx-16 and the Sega Genesis. First of all, the gamer feels cheated from the start: Both systems are packed with only one controller. Add to that the fact that the Genesis includes a two-player cooperative game (Altered Beast) with the system, and one feels a bit had. The NEC strategy, however, is even worse. Not only is the TurboGrafx packaged with one controller, but the console itself has only one controller port. In order for a second player to join the fun, an adapter must be purchased (that allows plug-in of up to five controllers) in addition to the second pad. Now that's cruel!

"Based on what I have played thus far, the Genesis wins hands down. (The TurboGrafx is not a true 16-bit system after all, boasting only a 16-bit graphics chip.) The graphics and sound on this new Sega 16-bit wonder are truly, pardon the cliché, arcade-quality. Play *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* and you'll see what I mean (although that doggone flicker is still evident). The NEC games are just okay. Whose idea was it to package the decidedly mediocre *Keith Courage in Alpha Zones* with the TurboGrafx? What a first impression! In fact, I would be so bold as to rate many SMS games above what I've seen for the TG-16 in graphics, sound (especially) and execution. Considering the NEC system is our version of Japan's wildly successful PC Engine, I've yet to be impressed."

There you have one reader's opinion. As the letters continue to pour in, I'll let you know which system is number one in the collective opinion of the Q&A readership. Now, on to a "regular" question!

question

Why isn't the Color Computer 3 by Radio Shack ever mentioned in [VG&CE]? A few may have had CoCos in the past and sold them because of lack of software, but all that is history. The CoCo3 has features like other computers [including]: multitasking under its OS-9 Level 2 Operating System; the graphics of an Atari ST; the price tag of a C-64; the ability to use hard drives and big floppies; and multi-user and terminal capabilities of UNIX. Unlike other 8-bit computers, the CoCo3 can directly access memory up to 512K and can handle 16-bit calculations, thanks to its 16-bit registers in the CPU (the Motorola 68B09E).

—Darrell Jones
Pineville, Louisiana

answer

Darrell also suggests interested parties pick up a copy of *The Rainbow* magazine in order to further behold the wonders of the CoCo3. As to why the computer is never mentioned: the Doc contacted VG&CE's top computer-game reviewers and they all report never having received any CoCo3 software for review. Remember, this isn't a hardware magazine; it's about game software, and in terms of entertainment software, the CoCo line is pretty much out of the mainstream. Great letter, though.

NEWS, NOTES & QUICKIES:

Continued from previous page

• Casey Williams of Washington, West Virginia, has a technical correction for us: "You stated that the Amiga has 640 x 200 resolution. Actually, the Amiga can choose from 320 x 200, 320 x 400, 640 x 200 and 640 x 400 resolution, plus various overscan resolutions (same four-pixel sizes, but more available to the top and bottom). The Amiga has a total palette of 4,096 colors, not 496. Only HAM (hold-and-modify) mode allows all [of them to be displayed] at once, and it is somewhat difficult to program. Because many Amiga games, especially the ones from Britain, originate on the Atari ST, they are [generally] ported over to the Amiga in 320 x 200, 16-color mode. With VGA becoming so popular on the IBM, more games are being done in 64 colors (halfbrite) and HAM modes; 64 colors are the most allowed outside of HAM mode. Due to interlace flicker (an annoying idiosyncrasy of the Amiga), no games (that I'm familiar with) have been done in 320 x 400 or 640 x 400 modes. Wait until 1.4! " Thanks a lot, Casey. I'll try to put together that article you ask for on the subject of "How to Become a Game Author," but don't worry about the companies you send demos to not having Amigas. They do.

Finally, some reminders for folks writing to *Game Doctor*: Use a pen (the Doc's eyes can't read pencil anymore); include your name and address on the letter itself (not just the envelope); and remember, we don't answer specific strategy questions, just game-oriented queries.

That about finishes us up for this month. Next issue I hope to have both that Vectrex source as well as the extended look at the early stand-alone programmable systems promised last time. Remember the Adventure Vision? MicroVision? The Blockbuster? We'll talk about all of them next time in response to a great question from Kevin Amedy of Worcester, Massachusetts, that's taken me an extra month to nail down. Till then, keep questioning! And remember to send the ones you can't answer to: *The Game Doctor*, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

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In this age of huge design and programming teams, with specialists to handle everything from code crunching to musical scoring, Donald A. Hill Jr. seems like something of a throwback. Hill has designed, programmed, packaged and marketed three successful simulator programs for the Apple Macintosh. His only support in this solitary venture was his dad, whose background in the printing business served as a valuable adjunct in the single-handed selling of a modern computer game.

The Hills got started in the software publishing business in 1984. Donald Jr. had taken a course in BASIC in high school. When he turned 21, he bought an Apple II and learned assembly language then used this knowledge to produce the original version of *Fokker Triplane*. "We shopped *Fokker* around," he explained, "but we eventually decided to self-publish. It was a big decision. My father is in the printing business, though, so we had the packaging tools at hand. My dad really supported me in this."

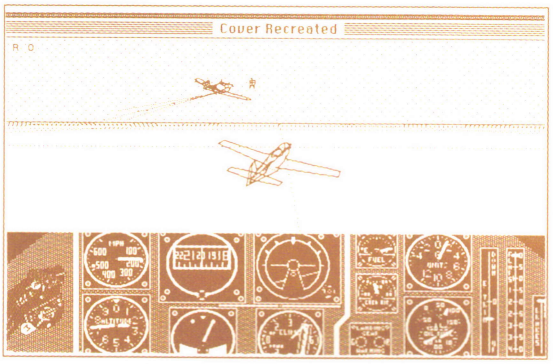
The company they formed, Bullseye, is a fully self-sufficient operation run out of the Hill homes in Incline Village, a small northern Nevada city near Reno. Donald Jr. does all the programming, while the senior Hill handles the business details, having given up his printing duties (while maintaining access to the all-important equipment) to work full time on Bullseye-related projects.

Bullseye still takes extensive advantage of the senior Hill's access to printing facilities, turning out excellent support documentation and quality packaging for the line. Product support includes *Bullseye Gazette*, a bi-annual, tabloid-format newsletter. The most recent issue features a cover story (with screen dumps) on a new version of *Fokker Triplane*, historical perspective (a short article on the famed Tuskegee Airmen), news (*P51 Mustang* is now featured in an exhibit at the Smithsonian), strategy/game play ("25 Things to Accomplish With *P51 Mustang Flight Simulator*") and even a piece by Hill Jr. on the subject of frame rates (the frequency with which the screen graphics are updated).

The individual stamp of Donald A. Hill Jr. appears on every element of the Bullseye package, as might be expected. He was drawn to the subject of simulators because of his fascination with airplanes and subLogic's groundbreaking *Flight Simulator II*. "I thought that [program] was really interesting. I'd already written a card-counting program for blackjack, but I'd always wanted to do a simulator. For me, the thing to do was to simulate the real thing."

His first attempt, the original *Fokker Triplane Flight Simulator*, wasn't even *programmed* on a Macintosh. "I worked on a 68K Sage II Micro computer." When the Mac came out, with the same chip and mother board, he changed computers and has been faithful to the Mac ever since.

"The original *Fokker*," Hill writes in the instruction booklet that accompanies the new version, "was 'chunky' in its control; the other aircraft looked more like a hang glider than a Sopwith or Triplane, and the sound was simplistic. And yet, the original *Fokker Triplane* was



SCENE 1: An attempt to re-create the P51 Mustang Flight Simulator cover painting. The pilot bailing out of the Me 109 can be seen just above the right wing.

very popular and successful. I was proud of it when I wrote it, and I'm glad I am able to rerelease it now."

Every designer in the simulator field faces a major dichotomy: realism vs. game play. Do they reproduce every nuance of actual flight or concentrate on simulating the experience of flight? "Realism is extremely important," Hill believes, "but this is an artistic choice, and you've got to strike some kind of balance. In the case of *Fokker*, I'd say it's a close call on the fun side; with *P51 Mustang*, it's probably a close call on the realism side."

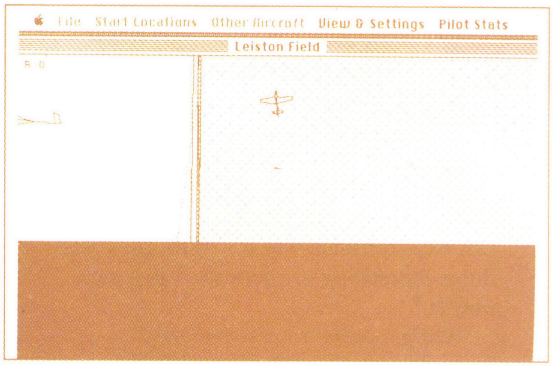
According to his design notes on *Fokker* Version 2.0, Hill "chose to keep *Fokker Triplane* [simpler] than *P51 Mustang*...Flight simulators are becoming more and more sophisticated with longer and longer manuals. I have no complaints about complicated flight simulators, but I thought it would be nice to make a 'seat of the pants' simulation available. In this simulation, fun is a little more important than realism. There is still a lot of realism, but on close calls, I wanted this program to be easy to just get in...and go."

The new version of *Fokker* features several improvements on the original game, including superior graphics, digitized sound, control over enemy aircraft (the user determines how heavy the resistance will be on each mission) and bombing.

After *Fokker*, Hill decided to try something different. That something turned out to be *Ferrari Grand Prix*, a Formula One racing simulation. "I had finished *Fokker*," he explained, "and I wanted to do *P51 Mustang*, but I wasn't ready. I'd always liked Formula One racing, however."

Ferrari was enthusiastically received by Mac users and game critics. Arnie Katz named it among the dozen hottest Mac games of 1987 in *MACazine* while Steven Levy dubbed it "Simulation Game of the Year, 1987" in the "Game Hall of Fame Annex" in *Macworld*. Employing a perspective that would later appear in Distinctive Software's *Test Drive* games, *Ferrari* literally puts the user in the driver's seat, with the wheel and car controls clearly visible in the lower foreground of the screen. "On-screen, the wheel sustains the illusion [that you are in the driver's seat]," Hill observed.

In *Ferrari Grand Prix*, users race against a pair of computer-guided Formula One racers on one of the pre-designed courses included with the disk or, using the "toolkit," create their own.



SCENE 2: The pilot of the P51 Mustang bails out over the Eiffel Tower to practice skydiving, trying to come as close to the tower as possible.

Users can also construct their own background, using *MacPaint*, or simply accept the mountainous horizon graphics included with the program. In addition to the three difficulty settings, it is also possible to handicap the computer drivers in any of several ways, from removing their top gears to making them "good drivers," which forces them to slow down on curves.

With *Ferrari* safely in the garage, Hill turned to his most daunting challenge yet, *P51 Mustang Flight Simulator*. This was the circa World War II air-combat contest he had wanted to start on earlier, but simply was not ready to tackle. Now he was ready, and the result is a worthy recreation of the ace combat aircraft of the '40s.

One of the technical issues Hill feels most strongly about is the question of frame rate, or the speed at which the screen is refreshed. In the most recent issue of *Bullseye Gazette*, he wrote the following on the subject:

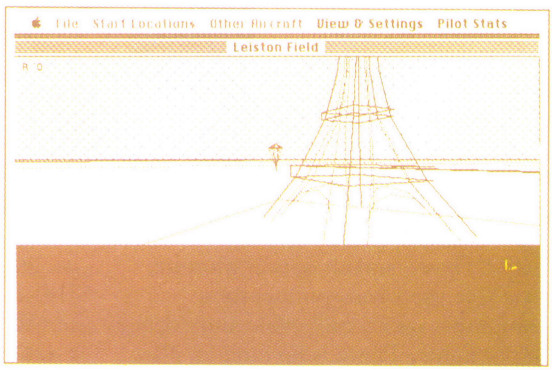
"When you see jerky motion in a program it's because the screen isn't being updated very frequently. This not only looks bad, but it makes flying, or whatever, more difficult.

"The frame rate is determined by the amount of work necessary to prepare the screen. In a program like *P51 Mustang*, the entire screen must be drawn every time. If you think about it, it's pretty amazing. The program must erase the screen, rotate all the points of objects about the viewer's perspective, then draw the horizon, sky and grid and all visible objects, including runways and the enemy aircraft. Every dot drawn is an access to memory.

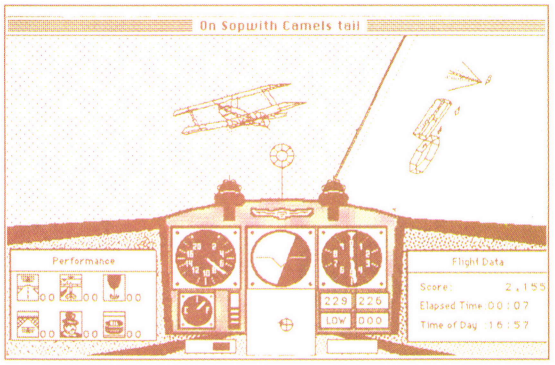
"Many people tell me they would like greater detail in the 'world.' And I agree...It would be easy to have 100 marines doing jumping jacks on the tarmac, but at what cost? The frame rate would suffer dramatically. So there is a choice to be made between out-the-window detail and frame rates. It's a relationship. More detail, slower performance.

"If a program is performing at two frames per second, it's also only listening to your commands twice per second. That's not a very fine resolution. Take landing, for instance; when you get close to the runway, things happen pretty fast. You're way ahead if you can make fine adjustments four times a second instead of twice.

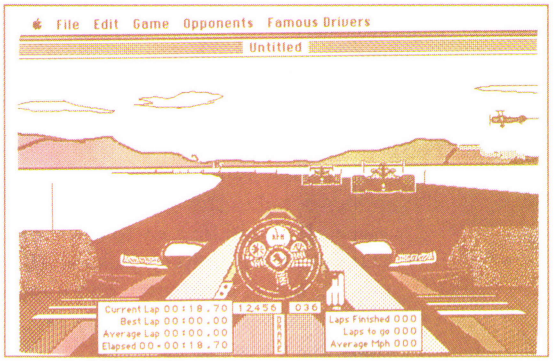
"In my programs I shoot for nothing slower than four frames per second. (Most of the time the performance is much better, something close to ten frames per second when there [aren't] many objects visible.) So I continue to add things in descending importance



SCENE 3: Pretty close... the parachutist about to touch down at the base of the Eiffel Tower.



FOKKER TRIPLANE: LINING UP THE FOKKER TRIPLANE BEHIND A SOPWITH CAMEL IN THIS DOGFIGHT AFTER SUCCESSFULLY BOMBING AN OIL TANK



FERRARI GRAND PRIX: JUST OUT OF THE STARTING GATE BEHIND THE COMPETITION IN THIS FORMULA ONE FAST ACTION SIMULATION.

until the speed approaches intolerable. Of course, it's a judgement call. Other programs seem to have a different tolerance of speed.

"Of course, with faster computers it should be possible to increase detail at the same frame rate as a slower computer. But there's a catch. With faster computers people usually want things like bigger screens and color. This of course means more memory, which slows things down.

"In my opinion, playability is directly related to the frame rate...."

P51 Mustang offers such features as instant replay of the final minutes of any flight, 13 camera angles, practice takeoffs and landings, ground strafing, landmarks, like the Eiffel Tower, and an option whereby two Mac users can connect their computers with a null cable and engage in dogfights. There is no modem play, however. "I considered a modem feature," Hill admitted, "but because of what it would do to the frame rate, I chose not to. I think it's very possible I'll add that feature on a future project."

Speaking of the future, we wondered if Donald Jr. had any plans to get in on the ground floor of the forthcoming CD technology. "Not right now, no," he explained. "CD is great for [reproducing many] intricate, but static, drawings. But it's difficult to get every perspective just right," he added, referring to the multitude of visuals that would be necessary to capture every possible point-of-view in a aircraft or automobile simulation. Moving the plane or car just a touch to the left or right would require an additional series of graphics, and so on. "But even with those limitations, this [CD] technology is very exciting."

Like most designers, Don is also a serious game player. "I like games like *Strategic Conquest*. I take a look at the other flight simulators, but I'm hypercritical; when I think they've done something improperly, I just can't play it."

Being a perfectionist also has something to do with Donald Jr.'s solitaire status in a world of sprawling design teams. "It's a lot of work," he admitted, "but I like programming. I've considered bringing in someone else, but it would take so much time to teach them..." His voice trailed off, his mind clearly absorbed by more creative concerns, like improving the frame rate.

His games take about a year each to produce, but that pace seems to suit the Hills. "When someone buys a piece of our software, it's like [we're] establishing a relationship with that customer." Those customers they've established relationships with include professional pilots. "With *Mustang*, we had people who owned Mustangs take a look at it. But sometimes people of that generation just don't understand computers, and it's hard to get past that. They had lots of insights, but it was hard for them to relate to the computer. Another guy, a real Mac fanatic, wanted to do all these real-world maneuvers." He was very successful, by the way. "We've had several pilots write [to us]," he added.

"The object," he explained at one point, expertly summing up his entire process, "is to create the illusion that suits what you imagine."

DONALD A. HILL JR. GAMEOGRAPHY

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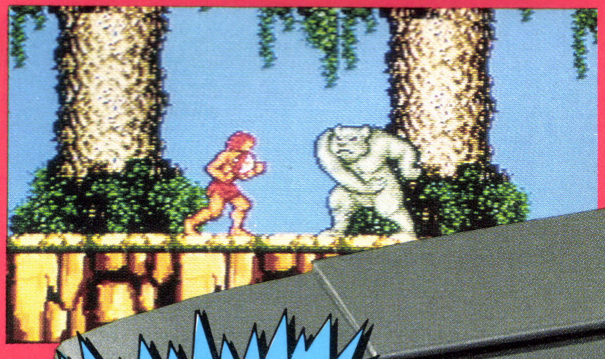

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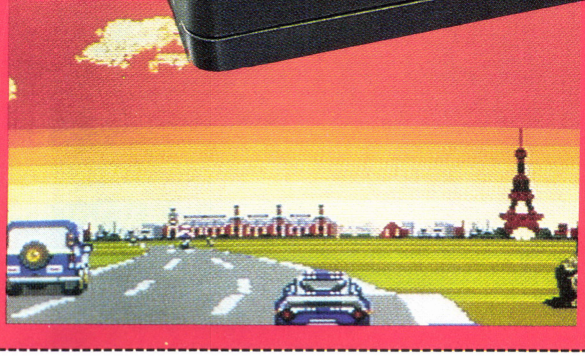

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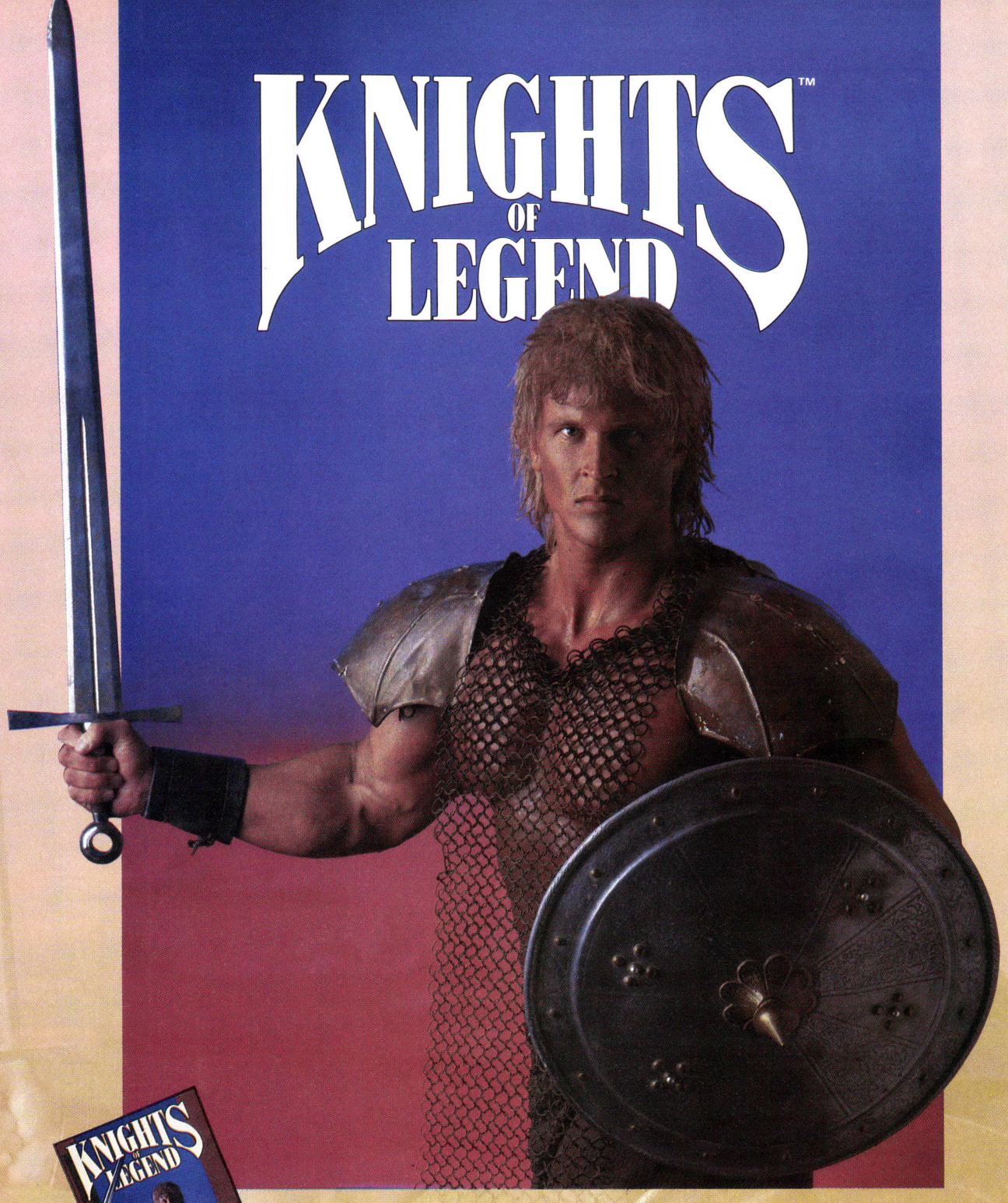

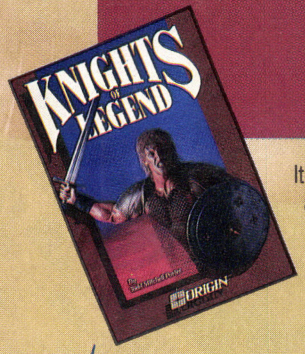

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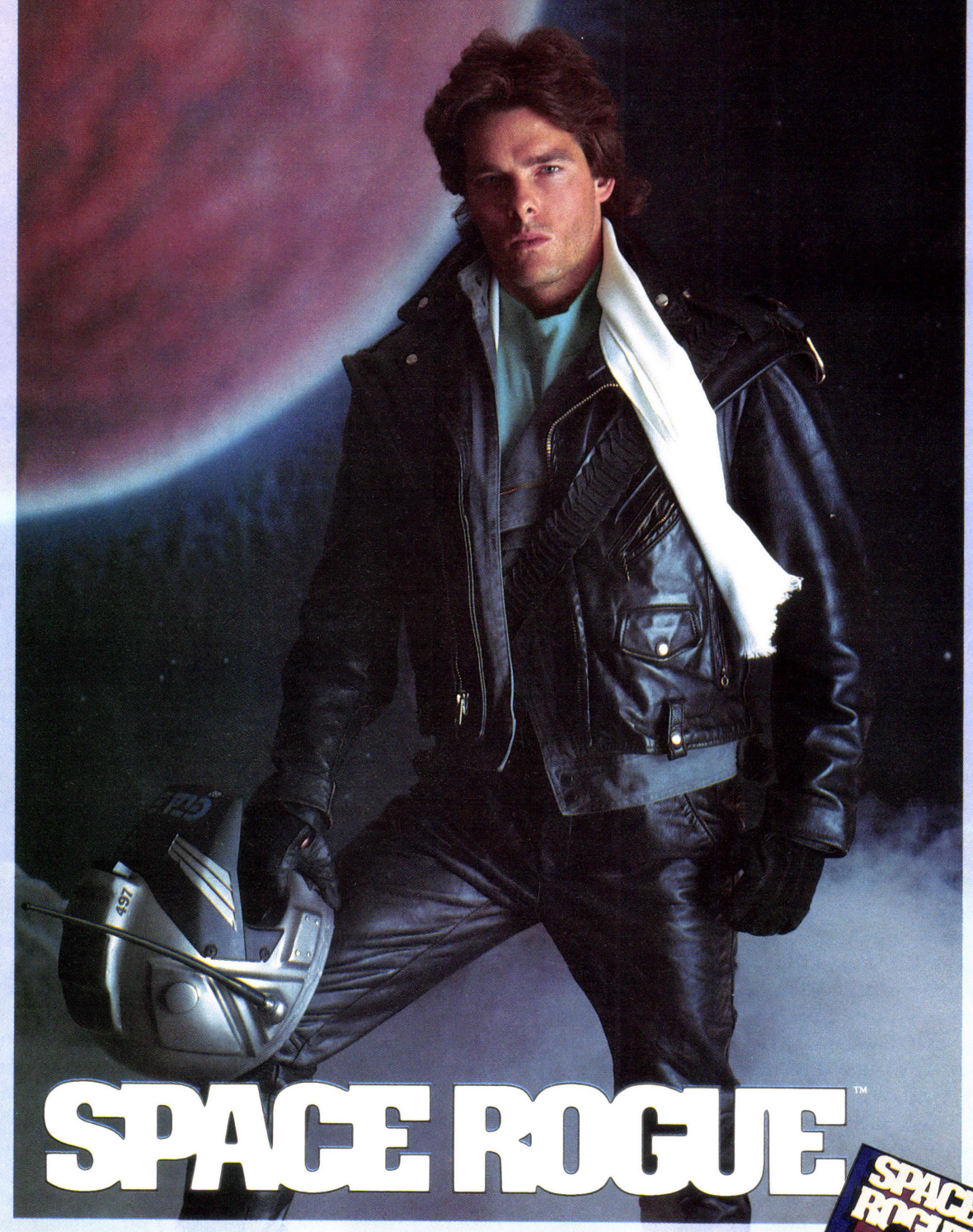

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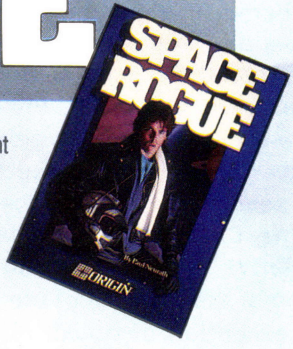

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The Colony

MINDSCAPE

Versions: Amiga ($49.95), IBM PC ($49.95), Macintosh ($49.95)

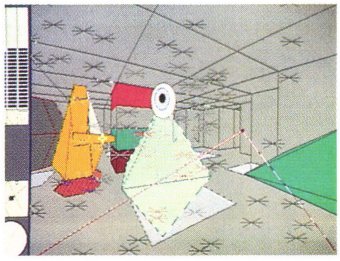
RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	7
Graphics	8
Playability	8
Overall	8

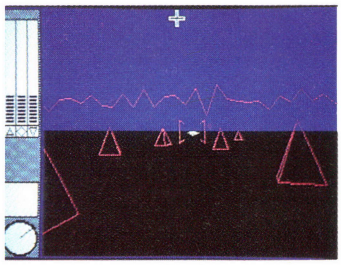
Delta 5-5 was established as a scientific research colony concentrating on the emerging science of teleportation. These brave individuals, keenly aware of the dangers of being on the cutting edge of science, little minded the remote location of their new home. The scientists experienced success with the teleportation of objects and, after some initial consternation, people as well.

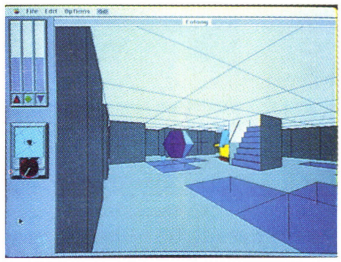
In the midst of their celebration over the apparent breakthrough, anomalies began to surface. Portions of the physical structure of the colony were warping inexplicably. Sometimes one might enter a room only to find no apparent exit. Worse yet, dangerous creatures, perhaps from another dimension affected by the teleportation experiments, appeared and threatened the continued existence of the colony. Despite the valiant efforts of the colonists, it soon became apparent that theirs was a losing battle. The children were placed in suspended animation and a distress call sent into the black vacuum of space. Enter your character, intrepid space marshall of the frontier, singlehandedly answering the call to save the children and solve the mystery of the aliens.

The Colony is perhaps the most addictive and challenging adventure game of the year. All of the action, with the exception of object manipulation, takes place in a realistic first-person perspective, a truer 3-D representation than ever attempted before for the IBM. Utilizing keyboard, joystick or mouse input (the latter is recommended), players move smoothly through their new world using a cursor that takes directional input according to its position in the center of the monitor. Graphics can be viewed as either open or filled polygons with the former significantly speeding up game play on XT machines.

***The Colony*, by Mindscape, has a clean 3-D representation, which makes maneuvering your character easier.**







Object manipulation happens in a more conventional two-dimensional format, accessed automatically upon approach to the item. This can be a hindrance at times as quite a bit of movement throughout the eight level colony is required to solve the game. Oftentimes, journeys back and forth are annoyingly slowed (until teleporters are acquired) by objects that throw one into 2-D mode due to your proximity to them, whether you wish to examine them or not. Additionally, the sound significantly slows game play, so it is recommended that after a couple of sessions the audio be toggled off. (Note: Macintosh versions of the game do not provide this option).

The primary goals of the player are to find the colony, rescue any survivors, repair the ship and eliminate the alien menace. Finding the colony is not too difficult as long as one conserves energy (i.e., don't bother trying to kill all the bugs on the surface of the planet, they are irrelevant to the goal, and it's possible to outrun them). Once inside the colony, energy is replenished by letting one's suit consume the eggs left by the alien inhabitants.

As in every adventure game, it is important to map each level carefully and save the game frequently. Finding all of the cryogenic storage modules, teleporters, forklift and other essential items takes a lot of time and dedication. Along the way, even the most resolute and experienced adventurers will undoubtedly stumble into one of the dead ends.

Rescuing the survivors and repairing the ship is fairly challenging, since it

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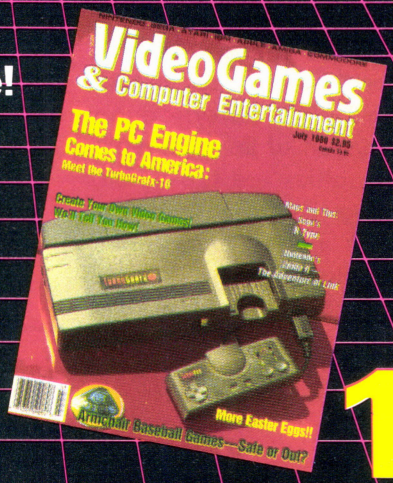

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CKQAA

involves some deft object manipulation, somewhat like planning a chess game 15 moves in advance. It isn't possible to get off the planet unscathed, however, as one must eventually come to terms with the big, bad mamma alien. Once the queen is dispatched, it is just a matter of getting out of town, casting a fleeting glance backwards as the planet-destruct button is depressed and looking forward to the ticker tape parade.

This synopsis of the game plot grossly simplifies the nature of the task to be performed. *The Colony* is an engrossing simulation of an alien environment. The graphics are top-notch, the puzzles among the finest currently available and the overall experience challenging and unique.

—Ed Dille

Mindscape
3444 Dundee Road
Northbrook, IL 60062
(708) 480-1948

DeathTrack

ACTIVISION
Version: IBM PC ($44.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	
(w/board)	8
(w/o board)	1
Graphics	9
Playability	7
Overall	8

With every release, Dynamix looks more and more like the hottest development house in the entertainment software business. *A-10 Tank Killer* (Dynamix) showed it could produce a top-of-the-line flight simulator. *David Wolf: Secret Agent* broke new ground in the hot field of movie-style action-adventures and now, with *DeathTrack* (Activision), Dynamix demonstrates both its mastery over the action-strategy arcade genre and the technological vagueness of the IBM PC computer.

DeathTrack can be summed up as a car race with weapons, but only in the sense that Hamlet could be dismissed as a ghost story. *DeathTrack* is a visually eloquent, viscerally compelling action contest in which players select, equip and arm their vehicles, then take them out on a circuit of futuristic American cities for a series of gladiatorial races that make NFL football look like the National Patty-Cake Tournament.

With *DeathTrack*, Dynamix demonstrates its mastery over the action-stategy arcade genre.

There are three available cars with which the player can start out: the Hellcat (fast but not well armed), Crusher (good middle-of-the-road vehicle) and Pitbull (for those who like vehicular contact). These basic cars can be modified right down to the hubcaps by a quick visit to the equipment shop, where the user purchases engines, brakes, transmission, tires, airfoils and armor.

The weapons shop offers more goodies for starting competitors (who begin the game with $10,000 in their metaphorical pockets), including mines, caltrops (a clump of twisted metal spikes for release behind one's vehicle like mines), lasers, automatic mounted rifles, missiles, beams, ram spikes, wheel spikes and terminators. "Picture a high-explosive warhead strapped to a skateboard. Now slap on a rocket-pack and launch it..." is the description offered in the instructions.

However, it's a good idea not to spend all that money before the race begins. If the player's vehicle is damaged or runs out of weapons during the course of the race, it may become necessary to make a pit stop and reequip, rearm or rebuild, all of which costs money.

Once the player's car is ready, it's on to the races, either a single-track run or an entire circuit of cities (with the number of laps and level of difficulty open to user modification). Players earn money to further enhance their killer vehicles in two ways: by finishing high in the races or by taking bribes to eliminate specific competitors. Weasel-like characters often appear just prior to the start of the race and offer the player a fee to take out one of the other "trackers" (each of whom has his or her own distinct personality). Once such a deal is taken, however, the player must make every effort to do the dirty deed, since these gangster types are very easy to offend and make bad enemies (that is, they will probably start offering other trackers a bounty on *your* head).

The races themselves are spectacular, employing a *Test Drive*-like, inside-the-vehicle perspective and a panoramic view of the landscape. A large rearview mirror appears just above the windshield, and the cockpit is fes-

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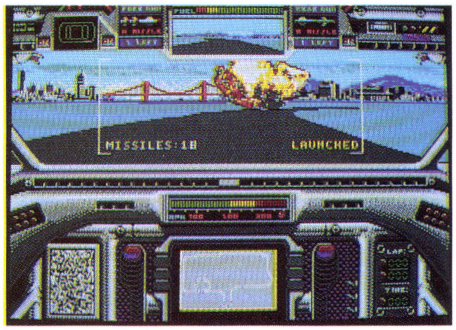
tooned with a variety of neat gauges and indicators. Virtually all commands are issued through a joystick, and there's even an autopilot feature that allows the user to concentrate on the really important stuff: the amazing variety of nasty weapons purchased at the start of the race or during one of the pit stops.

Unlike many action games featuring high quality graphics, *DeathTrack* functions nicely even in VGA (EGA emulation) mode. Nonetheless, the designers thoughtfully included a fine-tuning mechanism whereby the user can increase or decrease the graphic detail (speeding up or slowing down the frame updates). Joystick response is excellent even with maximum graphics, especially for an IBM PC program.



Though it lacks sound quality (unless you use an optional add-on sound board), *DeathTrack* is simply the finest auto-combat game available.

The documentation is mostly solid but could have used a complete rundown of the various types of engines, transmissions, etc., available in the basic cars. Although one eventually becomes familiar with the terminology, when first selecting a vehicle it's kind of tough to remember whether an XT 1000 engine is superior to an XT Turbo or if a Power Stream is a better tranny than a Synchro-Boost.

The game's only real deficiency is its sound, or lack thereof. While the program supports the optional Roland and Ad Lib sound boards, users without such peripheral devices get next to nothing in terms of audio effects. Otherwise, *DeathTrack* is the most exciting auto-combat game ever made available for home computers and, right now, Dynamix is similarly leading the industry in blazing state-of-the-art entertainment product on the IBM PC computer.

—Bill Kunkel

Activision
3885 Bohannon Dr.
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(415) 329-0800

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—The Action Game

LUCASFILM

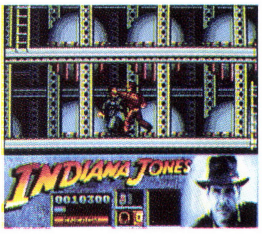
Versions: Amiga ($39.95), Atari ST ($39.95), IBM PC ($39.95), Commodore 64 ($29.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	5
Overall	5

Nothing conjures up thoughts of action and adventure like an Indiana Jones movie. Thus it is not surprising that the release of the third and final movie in the Indiana Jones series has been followed up with an arcade action game based on the exciting film. *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—The Action Game* was developed by Lucasfilm as a co-venture with U.S. Gold, a producer of a large number of arcade games in the United Kingdom, many of which have been imported to the U.S.

Three levels, each with two different action areas, confront our hero as he attempts to recover a trio of valuable artifacts. The first sequence features Indy as a young boy scout. The year is 1912, and he is searching a Utah cave for the precious Cross of Coronado. It is guarded by a gang of brutal grave robbers, and to escape them, Indy must make his getaway by jumping from car to car of a traveling circus train, dodging knives, fists and assorted animal heads that block his path to freedom.

Lucasfilm has done their best to capture the spirit and action of the latest Indy Jones movie.



Next it is on to the Venetian catacombs, where Indy must recover the Grail knight's shield. Lethal fireballs, nasty rats and crumbling masonry all threaten to cut short his quest. Recovering the shield is not the end, however. He must then scale the walls of Schloss Brunwald. Dodging searchlights, falling rocks and lightning bolts, he uses his whip to swing from ledge to ledge and find his kidnapped father.

The final sequence puts Indy on an airborne zeppelin as it heads for the Grail's resting place. Armed with only whip and fists, he must find his way through the ship's maze and sabotage the ship's alarm system.

After Indy makes it through all of this, he faces his three greatest trials, those that protect the Grail itself in the holy temple (familiar to all who saw the

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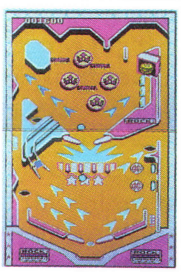
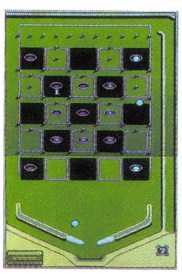


Choose one of the six different characters and play this traditional version of pinball by yourself or against your friends. The most skillful players will be challenged by a special level with a very sophisticated game.

NINEBALL



Place you bets and go for "bonus power" in this Bingo-inspired game of pinball. With practice and acquired skills, you can advance to a higher, more challenging level.

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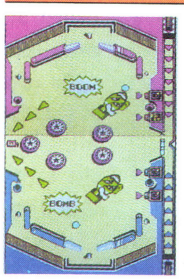
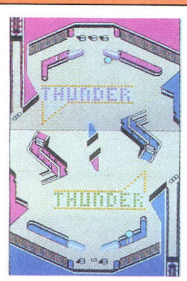
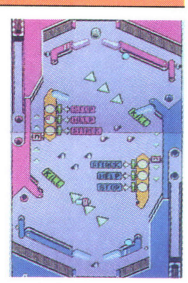


BOMBER
Challenge your friend or the computer in this explosive game. Try to match the images in the windows and enjoy some very special effects.

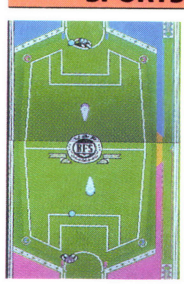


THUNDER
This may be the most simple of all three Battle Flipper games, but it takes technique to protect your goal and defeat your opponent.



ATTACK
Aim for the spinner and hit the targets of "stop", "help" and "attack" to take advantage of your opponent. You can also move both flippers back and forth across the screen to sabatoge him and win.

SPORTS PINBALL



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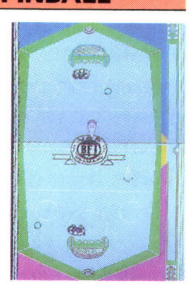

ICE HOCKEY
Hasty movements on the ice can lead to a missed shot for the goal. Consider the effects of slippery ice when you play this challenging game!

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movie). This is also a race against time, since Henry's heart is slowing and only a drink from the holy cup can stop his downward slide.

While the final goal is to reach the end of the third level, points are given along the way for each enemy defeated, every obstacle passed and each valuable object acquired.

The graphics are the high point of the game. They are well drawn and compare favorably with those found in most arcade games. Most play occurs in the upper portion of the screen, while the bottom section is reserved as a status area that shows various information about the explorer. In addition to Indy's current health and number of lives remaining, this area holds the objects Indy grabs as well as the status of his current torch in the cave sequences. The sounds are used liberally throughout the game and are more arcade-style than realistic.

Unfortunately such good potential is sorely wasted on the pitiful game play. Indy is very difficult to control on the screen. He is limited to basically moving left, right, up or down. He can attack by punching or occasionally using the whips he finds along the way. This would not be much of a limitation, except that all of his actions are carried out very sluggishly. Quick reactions are impossible.

Many other factors add to this frustration. For example, while jumping or kneeling Indy cannot perform any other action. For no discernable reason, the mere touch of an opponent quickly drains away his remaining health. Maybe their clothes are toxic.

In no way does this game live up to its *Action* title. It should have been called *The Frustration Game*. Even dedicated joystick jockeys will have a difficult time mastering the necessary mechanics to do more than adequately in the game. Only those who can stand long sessions of stupid deaths will manage to hang on and see Indy complete his sacred quest. Stay away from this game.

—R. Bradley Andrews

Lucasfilm, Ltd.
P.O.Box 2009
San Rafael, CA 94912
(800) STARWARS

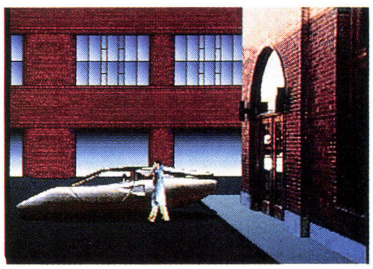
Mean Streets

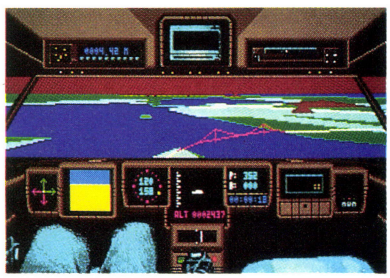
ACCESS

Versions: Amiga ($59.95), IBM PC ($59.95), Commodore 64 ($39.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	9
Graphics	9
Playability	7
Overall	8

Access' *Mean Streets* provides great sound and dazzling graphics with a decent plot to boot.





The streets of San Francisco aren't quite as nice in the year 2033 as they used to be. Corruption and conspiracy have been refined into new art forms. As Tex Murphy, private investigator, the player investigates the untimely demise of Carl Linsky, university professor and prominent scientist. Although Mr. Linsky was observed doing a triple gainer off the Golden Gate Bridge and was nice enough to leave a suicide note to boot, his daughter Sylvia is convinced it was murder. Her loving concern to get to the bottom of her father's death is spiced with a $1,000,000 insurance policy that prohibits payment in the event of suicide. Sounds juicy, doesn't it? It is, and it only gets better. The plot is tightly written and well paced, with enough twists and turns to keep mystery fans on the edge of their seats.

Players interact with over 30 characters and travel to locations up and down the West Coast in a futuristic speeder in order to solve the mystery. This portion of the game features a fully functional, 3-D, solid-fill flight simulator. The simulator graphics are less refined than other flight products (such as the San Francisco scenery disks for *Flight Simulator 4.0*) but, after all, this is an adventure game. Players do see major landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge, from which Mr. Linsky took his dive, as well as the flashing landing pad that is their destination. Each pad is tied to a character or location and has its own address/navigation code. Players determine new codes from interrogation of their suspects; thus more locations may be accessed as the game progresses. Adventure purists may avoid the flight-simulation portion by utilizing the speeder's autopilot.

One of three things is required at each location. The most common is the interrogation sequence. The player is initially treated with a dazzling panora-

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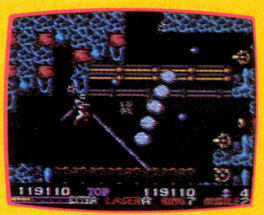

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ma of the area being visited (Alcatraz for example) followed by a window insert of the character to be questioned. These digitized images animate and respond very convincingly to the questions posed them. To illustrate, whenever Mr. Linsky's fiancé is asked about his death, she cries and dabs a handkerchief to her eyes. Additionally, many of the characters actually talk with Access' patented process known as Real Sound. This process of digitizing high quality sound onto the software and modulating the internal PC speaker produces outstanding results for machines without a separate sound card. Players hear screams, thuds, groans and very intelligible, high quality speech. The catchy, futuristic Sam Spade soundtrack is top-notch. Players may find that some of those questioned are hesitant to discuss certain topics. These tight-lipped folks must be bribed or threatened to make them talk, sometimes with humorous results.

Some locations have a text-only message with either a clue or a red herring. Other locations are rooms that must be searched thoroughly. The perspective is from high on the front wall of the room with the player figure entering from the back. As the figure moves next to various objects or furniture in the room, menus appear for the manipulation of those objects (look, open, move, get, taste, etc.). Some rooms contain traps for the player, and a couple must be entered more than once to complete the game.

Occasionally entry into an area produces a gunfight arcade sequence. The objective in these screens is simply to move the player figure from the left to the right of one or more screens without getting killed in the process. It is irrelevant how many thugs get killed, because nobody is keeping score. There is no challenge to this portion: Simply hide behind obstacles and move forward in short bursts as pauses in gunfire allow. Although adventures with arcade action included are much in vogue at present, the inclusion of these low-skill arcade sequences is actually annoying in *Mean Streets*.

Another source of annoyance is the need to push a key five or six times before the action occurs. This is because the graphic loops are so complex that keyboard input can only be checked periodically. Much of this frustration may be avoided by holding the key down until the command is recognized (2-5 seconds usually).

Billed as an interactive detective movie, *Mean Streets* accomplishes its effect by utilizing video technology, over 30 actors, full-size sets and custom scale models. It is important to note that there is a major difference in the look and feel of the game from a fast CPU with a VGA card to a standard XT with CGA. The latter has mediocre graphics and cannot access any of the Real Sound routines because of memory restrictions imposed by the graphic loops. However, equipment that can handle all the programming stuffed into this disk produces an entirely different level of player enjoyment. *Mean Streets* is a dazzling product, a showpiece game for VGA machines.

—H. E. Dille

Access Software, Inc.
545 West 500 South
Bountiful, UT 84010
(800) 824-2549

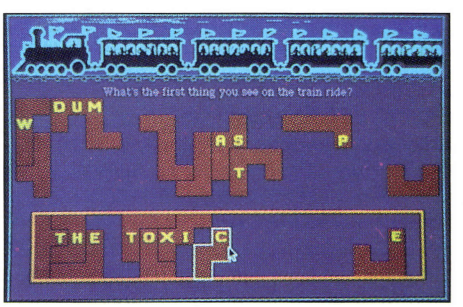
Puzzle Gallery

MILES COMPUTING
Versions: IBM PC ($39.95), Macintosh ($39.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	10
Overall	9

The finely tuned, if slightly off-center, mind of Cliff Johnson is on the loose again! The creator of the phenomenally innovative *Fool's Errand* (Miles Computing/IBM PC, Macintosh) is back with 180 more mind-bending puzzles.

Puzzle Gallery is not truly a game, because it actually has no content. It is an engine. That is, it establishes a format for presenting anthologies of Cliff Johnson stumpers. The package reviewed here contains both the basic disk with the engine and a puzzle disk called "At the Carnival." If the initial



Cliff Johnson's twisted sense of humor shows through in Miles' *Puzzle Gallery*.

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offering achieves its deserved success, Miles plans to market more collections for separate purchase.

Johnson specializes in electronic versions of "pencil-and-paper" diversions, rather than the physical puzzles common in action games or the object-manipulation tests found in many adventure games. Most of the 180 posers included in "At the Carnival" are find-a-words, codes, word squares, anagrams, mazes and jigsaws.

Johnson structured *Fool's Errand* as an adventure with layer upon layer of mysteries. Solving the individual puzzles was only a prelude to assembling the map of the sun to penetrate the macro-puzzle.

"At the Carnival" is a more straightforward affair. It's a tour of the 40 attractions of the fictitious Hazard Park, from the parking lot to an enigmatic capper called "The Future." When the computerist finishes a puzzle, a check mark appears next to its name on the pull-down menus at the top of the main display. When every puzzle is check-marked, the user may attempt the final challenge.

Some of Hazard Park's attractions feature multistage puzzles. Completing the find-a-word or jigsaw gains a short animation or audio flourish, and then another test appears on the screen. Working through three or even four puzzles is sometimes necessary to earn the coveted check mark.

The puzzles vary tremendously in difficulty, and some people may want to approach *Puzzle Gallery* with the hint sheet available from Miles in hand. Johnson's sense of humor is much in evidence, which can be both a joy and a trial to the dedicated solver. Learning to think a little like the writer is a virtual necessity.

The artwork is simple, yet effective. Computerists should have little trouble figuring out what pictures represent, which is very important when working on the numerous jigsaw puzzles included in "At the Carnival."

The control system, perfected in *Fool's Errand*, is a joy. Simple keystroke commands allow the player to make and retract moves easily. The harder puzzles are frustrating enough without the extra irritant of an ungainly control scheme, so the clean procedures in *Puzzle Gallery* are an especially welcome blessing.

There's nothing to excite action fans here, but *Puzzle Gallery* does provide a strenuous workout for the brain. If you enjoy a stiff mental challenge, a trip to Hazard Park is a must.

—Arnie Katz

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Sword of Aragon

STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS INC.
Versions: Amiga ($39.95), Commodore 64 ($39.95), IBM PC ($39.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	NA
Graphics	7
Playability	9
Overall	8

Sword and sorcery fans have long realized that the great literary epics of the struggle between good and evil, such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Donaldson's *Thomas Covenant* series and the *Dragonlance* books by TSR, have climactic scenes that revolve around immense confrontations on the field of battle. In a market replete with fantasy role-playing games, it was inevitable that players would need the ability to field armies against hordes of orcs, goblins and other undesirables. Strategic Simulations' new release, *Sword of Aragon*, does more than just provide players a chance to direct their military forces against the baddies: It also places them in direct control of the economic, political and social affairs of a medieval era fantasy barony.

Fans of sword and sorcery games will truly love SSI's *Sword of Aragon*.

Players assume the mantle of the heir of Aladda, one of the city states within the realm of Aragon. The object of the game is to reunite the land under a single ruler by attaining the throne in the city of Tetrada. It's not for the scrupulous: Along the way it's necessary to

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subjugate or vassalize other cities, ally with some of the nonhuman inhabitants of the realm and successfully defend one's holdings from invaders.

Players initially choose their character class (warrior, knight, ranger, priest or mage) and the composition of their armies. Each class possesses certain advantages and disadvantages with regard to individual abilities and the types and costs of army units available to them. Units depicted are infantry, mounted infantry, bowmen, mounted bowmen and cavalry, and each of these also have their characteristic advantages and disadvantages, depending on the tactical situation.

Each turn constitutes one month of game time, during which the player may develop resources, conscript recruits or change the tax level in any or all of his cities. Actions may impact upon the morale, loyalty, health or size of the population within that city. These tasks are accomplished via a text-only information screen accessed by placing a cursor over the city in question.

Every turn players also have a chance to make, equip, reinforce, train or decommission any units located in a friendly city. Units afield may encounter random groups of unfriendly combatants or might be sent to attack or lay siege to a neighboring fiefdom. In a touch of reality, their level of success has an direct impact on the morale and loyalty of the home populace.

Force movement initially occurs on a strategic map of a portion of the realm of Aragon. Major terrain features such as roads, cities, rivers, forests and mountain ranges are depicted much as one might see on an antique cartographer's scroll. Whenever contact is made with other forces, depending on which side surprises the other, players may have the option of avoiding combat. This is advisable when the odds are poor (titans and giants are always tough) or if one is en route to a enemy city and seeks to avoid force losses in a random encounter. If combat does occur the screen zooms into a more detailed map so the player can maneuver his forces and take advantage of the best defensive terrain. Each battle is composed of a maximum of 23 turns (15 minutes of game time each) and is usually resolved in ten minutes real time (for random encounters) to 30 minutes (for major battles). The warfare is, alas, silent. More attention to sound and music would have added more depth to this otherwise well-thought-out program.

Sword of Aragon is smooth, bug free and takes about 45 hours to complete.

To be successful in battle, it is important to utilize terrain and troop types to their best advantage. SSI has considered the historical strengths and weaknesses of ancient troop formations in the design, so it helps to study some of the battles of antiquity when devising tactics. I adopted the tactics of Justinian the First of the Byzantine Empire to great success. Essentially, this involves the establishment of a line of heavy infantry to act as a protective base for mounted archers and heavy cavalry. The archers harass and, hopefully, disperse large formations of enemy troops. Cavalry units are poised in reserve to counterattack and destroy weakened units and, when the time is right, the heavy infantry advances on the objective to overwhelm the remaining defenders. This tactic proved highly effective, but a myriad of tactical options exist, and half the fun is finding the one best suited to the chosen army and individual style of play. *Sword of Aragon* supports hard disk installation, all graphics modes through EGA and an optional mouse. The graphics are crisp and functional. Troop formations and individual characters are particularly impressive. They resemble miniatures from traditional war gaming, a nice touch and indicative of the detail that went into the products' development. Copy protection is in the excellent documentation as well as in the poster enclosed with the game (don't throw it away). The program is smooth, bug free and takes about 45 hours to complete. Although a large number of preset events repeat in subsequent games, the variations inherent in tactical combat, which forms the heart of the game in any case, serve to preclude replays from becoming too linear.

The designers did an excellent job on *Sword of Aragon.* It provides the thrill of fantasy battle in a milieu of reality

that will almost make gamers believe they're in a medieval world.

—Ed Dille

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Pipe Dream

LUCASFILM

Versions: Amiga ($39.95), Atari ST ($39.95), IBM PC ($39.95), Macintosh ($39.95), Commodore 64 ($29.95)

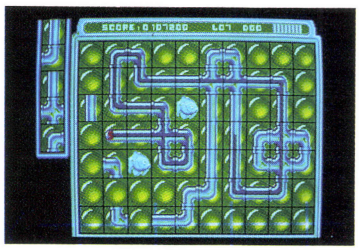
RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	8
Overall	8

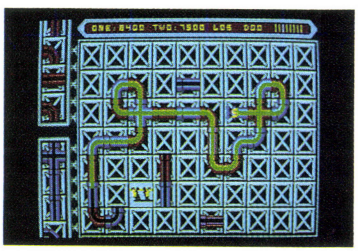
The Acme Chemical Company needs plumbers! I'm sure this is a subsidiary of the same Acme company famous for sending the Coyote such wonderful products in his quest to get the Road Runner. The company operates very much like its products and has gotten itself into a fix. They just invented a new sewer cleaner called flooz, but the problem is that they are making it faster than it can be pumped into waiting tank cars. It's up to the player to construct an emergency pipeline to hold this flowing fluid and prevent the company from being buried in a sea of green.

The playing field in *Pipe Dream* starts out empty except for the starting piece, a spigot from which large quantities of flooz soon begin to flow. The available pipe pieces appear in a bin on the left side of the screen. Each piece may be placed anywhere on the field, but must be played in the order it comes. Since pieces don't need to be connected initially, successful players will soon learn to anticipate connections many moves in advance.

The player can "bomb" an existing piece to replace it with a new one, though this takes time and costs a few points. Pieces that have already been filled, the starting piece and pre-placed pieces in the higher levels cannot be "bombed."

Each round begins with a time delay before the flooz flows, then the flow continues until it runs out of pipes. The player is then penalized for all unused pieces, and the game moves on to the next round.





In the same vein as *Tetris*, Lucasfilm's *Pipe Dream* requires careful thought in placing pieces to be successful.

While the game seems rather easy in the first round, later rounds place more and more obstacles in the player's way. Not only is the initial time delay shorter, but in the higher levels, the flooz flows faster and the board starts with pre-placed pieces and blocked areas. The blocked areas can never be entered and are simply a hindrance, but the other pieces can actually be useful. Some give bonus points if they are used in the pipe network, while others are reservoirs that hold more flooz and temporarily slow the flow, giving the player a bit more time. Some of the side walls are also removed at the higher levels, allowing the flow to ooze out one side of the playfield and reenter the other.

All the pieces initially allow flow in either direction, but some later pieces are directional. Some of the later rounds also place an ending pipe on the board. If the flooz flow ends in this piece, the player gets a large bonus.

The graphics are simple but appropriate for the game; for example, the pipe squares look like real pipes with mossy growth on them in some levels. The music is also simple but effective. Once the flow starts, the music becomes a bit more serious and gradually increases in tempo as the flow increases, similar to the soundtrack of a good suspense movie.

The game also provides a smooth learning curve through training, beginner and expert modes. One or two players can compete and passwords are given at various levels to allow the experienced player to skip the starting levels. The game is copy-protected, but the provided code wheel is only required at the start of play.

Pipe Dream, in the same vein as *Tetris*, requires a good combination of quick reactions and strategic thought. The pace is slow enough to allow for some strategy, yet the pressure is always there to quickly place another piece. This is a good game and is sure to gain a loyal following.

—R. Bradley Andrews

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COMPUTER STRATEGIES

A Sure Cure for the Alien Syndrome

MINDSCAPE

Versions: Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM PC

It's happened! An alien virus has infested one of Earth's most important outcolonies, and the inhabitants are hostages of these hideous parasites. Once again it's the overworked computer player who must rid the colony of the vile creatures before all is lost. Gamers must fight their way through six increasingly difficult scenarios in an effort to destroy the enemy while saving as many humans as possible.

The secret to success in *Alien Syndrome* is a good game plan. Once a mission begins, find the nearest map and take a few seconds to study it carefully. Try to plot a course that will cover as much ground as possible without having to retrace any steps. For example, on the first level, start by heading right, toward the far wall, where a map is located. A study of this map will reveal that the best path to travel is down and left across the colony, up to the top and then right toward the exit. This path will swing the player around most of the colony, past the largest percentage of hostages.

Early in the game establish the location of some major firepower. Although there are four weapons to choose from, the laser is by far the best. It destroys the most enemies while having the best effect on the super-aliens on the first three levels of play. The player can obtain a laser after initially traveling right on Level 1.

When traveling through an outcolony, keep a few important things in mind. First off, keep moving. If the player stops too long to study a map or just hang around, the aliens will home in, in hordes. Second, bear in mind that the walls of the colony seem to be very sticky; our hero will often become "stuck" to a wall if he/she accidentally runs into it. Avoid this by running up the center of corridors. Notice that when players travel they are fairly close to the edge of the screen they are scrolling towards. This can be dangerous if an alien is waiting just out of view. There are two ways to compensate for this: One is to use the start/stop technique. In other words, run a few paces, then stop, and the screen will continue to scroll a second or so, revealing any aliens hiding in the rafters. The other way to handle this problem is simply to shoot continuously as one travels. However, this requires care; trigger-happy players may inadvertently shoot a waiting hostage.

When moving through the maze always pick up question marks for bonus points as well as any small blue squares. These award the player a tiny helper who will at first seem like a lousy shot, but may very well fire a lifesaving blast later on. Once the player rescues enough hostages, he or she will be instructed to head for the exit. Remember to take note of its location when studying the map so you won't have to waste valuable time searching.

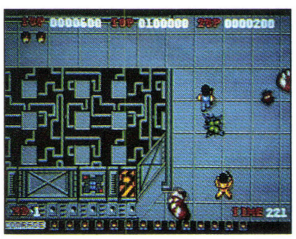
If the instruction to exit appears when there is still a lot of time left, players may rescue a few more hostages for bonus points. However, don't attempt this unless you are sure you can destroy the super-alien that will follow. If you're not confident of your ability to do this with speed, head directly for the exit without wasting moments: Killing an unfamiliar alien requires a good amount of time.

Once the super-alien appears, players must find the creature's weak point as quickly as possible. This is the most challenging part of the game, so it's best for me not to give away too much, but here are some pointers to get you started:

• The alien on Level 1 is slow and fires a volley of human-seeking missiles from a door in his belly. Try to attack him when this door opens. Once the body explodes, the creature's head will be mighty upset. Don't fret. Just avoid its lunges, and open fire as it retreats.

• Level 2's super-alien is surrounded by wiggling worms that must be destroyed first before he becomes vulnerable. Here again, concentrate on this weak point while avoiding the homing weapons.

—Frank Tetro, Jr.



Whatever you do, don't stop moving, or you'll end up pushing up space daisies.

Go Ahead...Take a Risk

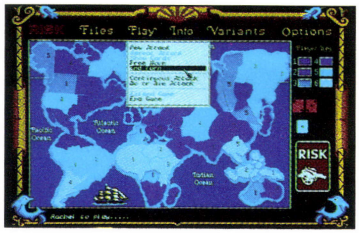
VIRGIN MASTERTRONIC

Versions: Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM PC

The computer version of Parker Brothers' celebrated strategy game should create a whole new legion of would-be world conquerors. Virgin Mastertronic's new electronic board game provides robot adversaries to fill all the rest of the chairs, making it possible for many who could never collect enough participants to finally enjoy the many delights of this six-player struggle for global supremacy.

Seekers of "perfect plans" for a *Risk* victory are doomed to be disappointed. This six-ring circus of Byzantine complexity and subtle nuance cannot be solved or conquered. Every game,

even solitaire against five computerized foes, is different. Adding more human players further increases the number of variables.



The "best" plan is to capture enough territories to win while thwarting the other competitors. The tricky part is that a strategy that succeeds brilliantly in one game may bring a quick exit in another one.

But don't despair if you're new to *Risk*. With the considerable assistance of two Virgin Mastertronic masters, Annette Childs and Mario Flannini, I've got some tips that should keep you in the first few games while you formulate some plots of your own.

Australia is an easy continent to conquer, but try not to concentrate too much on one particular area or you'll tax your army.

Choosing territories and placing armies is a crucial phase of the game. Pick territories in geographic proximity to make your possessions easier to defend and facilitate the rapid movement of armies within your boundaries. If possible, group your choices on one landmass to put your nation in position to collect the bonus that rewards capture of an entire continent.

Some continents are harder to conquer than others. Australia is the easiest, because it is composed of so few territories and has only one border province against which another player could mount a threat. South America is probably next easiest, because it has just two border territories, followed by Africa, North America, Europe and Asia.

Our experts all caution against getting fixated on taking a particular continent. It's wasteful to burn up armies in a fight to hold or annex Australia. Save the major troop commitments for the big prizes, like Asia.

In both the initial-placement phase and subsequent turns, keep track of which players are close to assembling a continent. It's sometimes good strategy to let others expend armies to stop the completion of a continent, but be prepared to take an active hand to derail such plans. A quick raid against a coastal or border territory, even if you will eventually have to withdraw or even sacrifice a couple of pieces, is not a bad idea.

The strongest defense puts most of the armies in the border provinces where they can defend or attack. Send your armies from territories that are completely surrounded by other areas under your control to the front to join the battle. Making maximum use of armies is the key to a win, believes Childs. She advises players to think several moves ahead so that armies end up at the edges of the empire, not standing useless in the rear ranks.

When another player starts building up in a territory next to one of yours, the temptation is to match him or her army for army. An arms race is not the answer to this national security problem.

Unless you're defending your major landmass, put enough armies in your territory to make some other invasion route look more inviting. If the potential invader has 20 armies, four or five in your territory are a reasonable deterrent, especially if a third player has a province with only one or two garrison units.

You need parity of forces only when your heartland comes under the gun. Don't let rivals mobilize dozens of armies next to one of your key territories without responding in kind. If there are several other humans in the game, this is the best time to point out that one of the other players is really much closer to winning than you are.

Spreading armies too thin is the cardinal sin of *Risk* neophytes, according to Flannini. A string of territories with one or two armies in each is begging to be invaded by the first ruler who builds up enough troops in an adjacent area to do the job.

Captured territories that border potential foes must be garrisoned. Beginners often try to keep an advance going too long and end up with a weak spearhead. What's the sense of gobbling up a dozen territories only to lose them, and more, immediately?

Risk, like chess, is a game that can be played and replayed. This short article is only the first step on the road for those who would become powerful players. Fortunately, it is also one of the most pleasant roads any gamer could wish to travel.

—Arnie Katz

Rules for Secret Agents

DYNAMIX

Versions: Amiga, IBM PC

Dynamix's latest release for the PC market, *David Wolf: Secret Agent,* turns the player into the world's greatest secret agent. The object is to keep Wolf alive through the five action scenarios so that he may rescue the Stealth Jet and free the kidnapped scientist Kelly O'Neal from the ominous clutches of Bruno Vasto.

Hang Gliding

In this scenario, David Wolf is ambushed by four attack gliders while he is testing the agency's newest weapon. The second the game begins, open fire on the enemy glider that appears directly in front of Wolf. A slight up or down adjustment may be necessary to get the enemy in the sight. It's very important to take this first glider out early and give Wolf an escape path in case of trouble.

Once this glider goes down, immediately bank left and go for the glider on Wolf's left. Wolf will be much better off when he swings around for the second volley, if this one can be knocked out as it approaches. However, if the first few shots miss the second glider, pull down immediately. These guys would be just as happy ramming David's glider as they would shooting it down.

If the second glider is hit, simply bank a hard right until the next two gliders come around in

front and open fire. In this case, however, David will be under a lot more enemy fire and must use evasive action as he banks around right to avoid the crossfire.

The other thing David must watch is his altimeter. It is easy to lose track of the altitute and accidentally plunge into the ocean. To avoid this, keep the stick held back as the glider is turning, and only dive to avoid enemy fire or a collision with another glider.

Car Chase No. 1

Once David receives his mission objective from the agency, he leaves in search of clues. Out of the agency lot, he is attacked by enemy vehicles armed with machine guns. It's up to the player to get Wolf out of this tight situation.

In this first car chase, players can avoid the enemy cars in the rear by simply laying down oil each time Wolf begins a turn. As long as the oil keeps flowing, the enemy will usually never get close enough to open fire. If one does get too near, there are two ways to deal with him. One is to hit the oil on the next turn while moving the car left and right across the straight road to avoid any gunshots the enemy may get off before Wolf can reach the turn. The other is a bit more difficult but a lot more fun. As Wolf approaches the turn, hit the oil and slam on the brakes at the same time. This will make the enemy slide right past David's car. Immediately switch to machine guns and fry 'em!

Toward the end of this scenario Boor will order another car to engage Wolf, but this one appears in front, coming directly at Wolf. No problem—simply switch to missiles and blow him away.

Car Chase No. 2

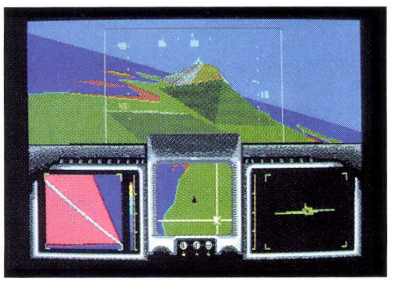
After Wolf's unsuccessful rescue attempt in the casino he must hop in his car and run for his life. This time, the enemy has a new secret weapon.

Start the chase as you did the last one, laying down plenty of oil through each turn. This time, however, the enemy cars are faster and come up on Wolf quicker. This is fine unless they do so on a long, straight section of road. If this happens, repeat the oil-and-brake maneuver to get them out in front, and immediately open fire.

Midway through the scenario the screen switches to show a helicopter taking off. Guess where it is heading? The instant this occurs, switch to missiles and fire: The helicopter will be coming up directly in front of the car. If this first shot misses, the helicopter will fly over Wolf and come around for another pass. Switch back to oil and drop some to get the enemy off David's rear. Once done, immediately go back to missile control to be ready for the second pass. When the helicopter is eliminated, the rest of this scenario can be continued like car chase No. 1.

Parachuting

In this scene, David must steal the parachute off Garth Stock's back in midair in order to land on a delivery truck heading into Vasto's secret lair.



In Part 1, Wolf must maneuver so as to catch Stock and steal his parachute. Start by turning the stick so Stock is directly in front of David, and keep him there at all times. Once this is done, push the stick forward and fall toward Stock. If David begins to pass over Stock, pull back on the stick until he is slightly behind Stock once again.

Once the two men collide, David steals the chute and begins his descent towards the truck. When Part 2 begins, keep the truck directly in front, as in Part 1, and move the stick left and right to compensate for any crosswinds. As long as the truck remains right in front of Wolf's feet, all is well. When the truck is centered, push forward on the stick to fall faster until Wolf's feet hit the truck.

Listen carefully and react to whatever Kelly has to say, and you'll do a lot better.

Stealth Jet

In the final mission, David must navigate the jet home while warding off enemy fighters and surface-to-air missiles. Listen to Kelly and follow her suggestions without hesitation. Once the scene begins, immediately shoot out the hangar doors and increase to full throttle when Kelly says so. When the fighter is rolling down the runway, Kelly will advise David to pull up right as the jet approaches the enemy tank. Do so instantly. Any delay will result in a collision. Once airborne, fly the jet low to the ground and straight ahead until the surface-to-air missile flies past the jet. Next, Kelly will advise flying the jet through the hangar to shake the missile.

At this point, bank the jet hard to the left 180 degrees, until the hangar appears directly in front of the jet. Skim as close as you can to the ground, and navigate through the hangar, tapping lightly on the stick to make slight left and right adjustments.

Once the jet is free of the hangar, Wolf must then knock down two enemy fighters to complete the scenario. The jets appear on the bottom-center display in relation to the stealth. Use the stick to bring the fighters around to the front of the jet. Once the lock indicator appears, fire a missile and be ready for enemy fire. If a missile is coming at the jet, immediately steer hard right and dive to avoid the shot, then home in on the next fighter. Once a fighter is locked on the screen and David launches a missile, try not to steer hard in any direction until the missile hits the enemy: Doing so may break the lock and force a miss. After the two fighters are downed, Kelly will inform David that the landing is automatic, so you can sit back and watch comfortably. If all goes well, the plane will land and Wolf will have succeeded in saving the world. As a reward, he'll receive the gratitude of the beautiful Kelly O'Neal, much like a typical ending of another famous agent's adventures.

—F.T., Jr.

There's not a moment to rest in *David Wolf: Secret Agent*, with all the gun-toting criminals around.

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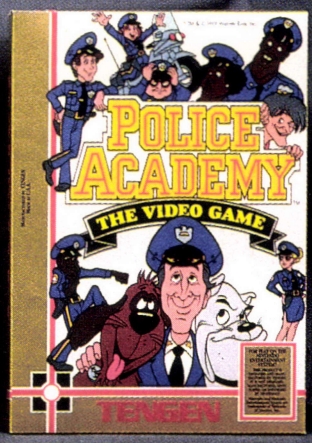

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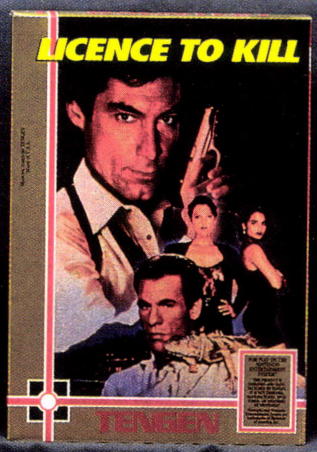

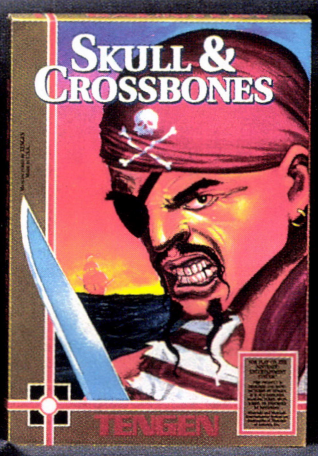

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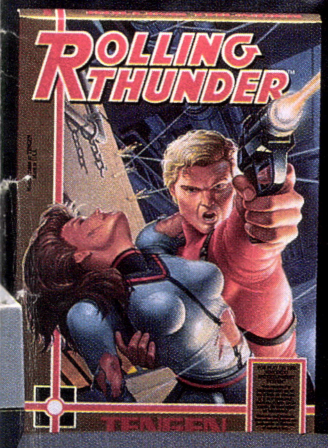

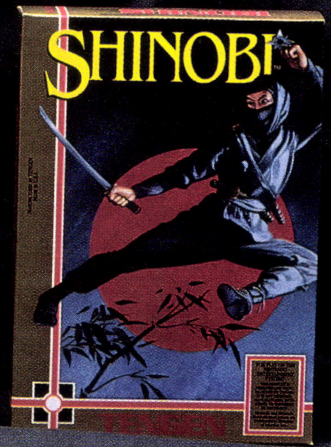

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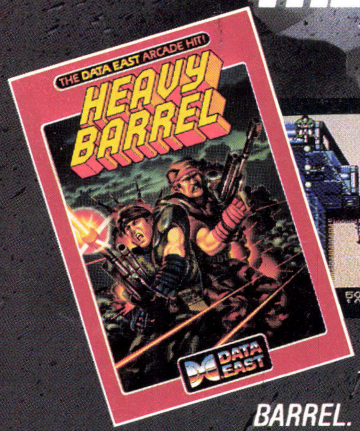

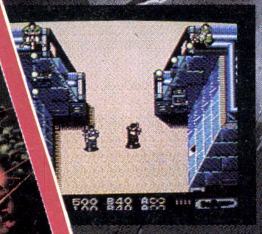

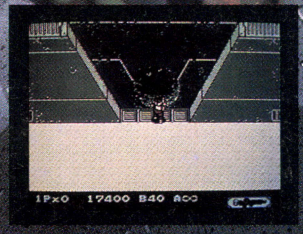

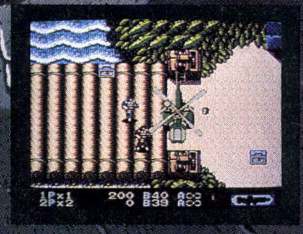

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